CHIEF
WITHIN

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.30

Another week another Beat, another week in spreading the love, especially when it comes to writing this week's editor's note. We won't say anymore on this, we'll let our guest writer tell it as he sees it, and we'll wrap the note up once he's done...

"Mervyn, give me 800 hundred words by tomorrow" those were the words that came out of David Inocencio's mouth right before I headed out the door of the office to my other job. "800 words, why you have to tell me right before I leave, Dave" that was my reply. "That's better than me, he gave me an hour before hand" stated my colleague Mr. Michael Kroll. So here I am the next morning, the day the publication comes out, sitting on my desk and getting those 800 plus words for David so he can put it in the Editors Note. I was planning to write on that topic "Life..." when it was presented in The Beat writing workshops about a month ago, but never got the chance to, so this is my chance...

What is life? How do most of us live out our lives? Someone once told me life is like a game of Chess, where every little move will determine your next move and every move have a consequences attached to it. And I agree. I don't see life as a game, but I do believe every little move or things we do in life will affect us in the future.

Throughout the times I have been working with The Beat and typing up writings that comes back from juvenile hall and beyond, I have read a lot of pieces where mostly youngsters will say, "Live life to the fullest," and most of the time when they say that, they are living their life to the fullest by gang banging, hustling, fighting, etc...Y'all get the idea right?

Me, I live my life to the fullest in a different way. You see, I have been through what most youngsters that are sitting in a cell have gone through, and I have taste the bitterness of losing my freedom to the criminal justice system and seen how much it hurts my loves ones and the things I missed while being separated from the "outside world".

I also used to live my life to the fullest by placing my life in danger, by hurting others and not even knowing it, and hustling. I admit, it was good while it lasted, but that lifestyle can't stay "good" forever. So now, I live life to the fullest by working (hustling the legit way) and absorbing any kind of knowledge that is thrown my way and also spending time with those I love.

To some of y'all living life on the edge might be easier than living life the legit way, and in truth I sometimes agree. Because sometimes when you are even trying to do the right things in life, it is not that easy. For example, my momma got into a car accident about a month ago which resulted in a broken ankle. I took about two weeks off to take care of her, from being her driver, and also to get her food. It was cool in the beginning but as time went by, when I had to go back to work, trying to do the right thing for my mom was not that easy. It can be very frustrating. My momma started depending on me to drive her to the doctors, to her lawyer, or even to go out with her friend. She didn't understand that I had to work and I can't always take time off to drive her around town when I have to make a living for myself. It was frustrating and because I couldn't help her as much as I could. When I took time off, in a way, I felt bad because as a son, I am supposed to be there for her. Then on the other hand, it was frustrating and annoying because she depended on me too much and expect me to take time off of work. So you see sometimes doing the right thing is hard, but we have to do it.

I read constantly from you young writers about how much you miss your mom or dad, how they cry even during a visit, but then many of you when you return home turn around and end up right back in the hall, facing time. Why? I've also seen people ending back up in the halls because they were trying to do good but then made a little mistake that got them caught up again.

Life is hard, no one every told me it would be easy. Like I said, sometimes I think life was easier when I was living it on the edge, not having to worry about working, bills, or any type of responsibility. Just spend the money and hustle again when it runs out. Chill with the homies, go get at some females, and wake up whenever I want to, because I didn't go to school. It was all about me. But now as I been through hard times and learned from my experience, juvenile hall and CYA, my definition to "living life to the fullest" has a totally different meaning.

Just remember, life is not easy, however it is not hard either, it is what you make it. You determine how you want to live it. Do, I live it like a game of chess, and watch every step I take to make sure the results of my every moves are positive and will help me in the future? Or... 'Till next time.

Merv, right on, you step up on topic and get us all scratching our heads while feeling every word you spit in this note. Keep on keeping on friend, you are living a beautiful life and we are so honored to be apart of it.

This week's topics addressed in our workshops prior to the writing in this week's publication was the very popular "Fear" – As children we all fear something, be it a big ol' spider, a bumble bee, going to the dentist and getting cavities, or the dark, when the lights go out, and the boogie man living in the closet to name a few. Over time most of us have overcome the fears that messed with our young lives, yet for some there are fears that have sadly left marks on our lives, like the fear of one's father/mother, stepfather or mother, grandparents, our big cousin, the mean ol' neighbor, or even the neighborhood bully and his dog. This week we want you to tell us what you feared as child and why you feared such an event, person or thing. How have you overcome this fear? Was it just growing up, or did you do something to make it go away? If you still haven't overcome this fear, do you think you ever will? How did it play a part in the making of you? Tell us.

The equally popular "Rock Bottom" — At what point in your life would you consider rock bottom? Life is full of ups and downs, good times as well as times that are not all good. Can you look back to a time in your life where you felt like just giving up, when you thought that life couldn't get any worse than what it was. If this is not "rock bottom" for you, explain how things have improved since that time of life that you considering you lowest point at rock bottom.

And last but surely not least, "Do Overs" – Remember when you were a kid and you were playing kickball or baseball and you messed up? Sometimes you would shout out "Do over." Wouldn't it be nice if you could do that in real life? If there was a real life "do over," when would you have used it? Would it be right before you got locked up? Or maybe it would be even farther back when you were younger and first started getting into trouble. It could be something as simple as saying something to someone you regret saying. We all have mistakes that we wish we could correct and things we would like to do over again. Tell us about something you would like to do over and why.

Knowing this, lets praise this week's POW (Pieces Of the Week) recipients! Congratulations goes out to Big Vic, Sharky, Buddamilk, Makayla, Lyshawn, Samantha, and two from Ally Bo all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC, Muck, David, and Omari. Also, Lil' Payasa from Walden House PSK, Ben from Marin, Latesse from Maricopa, Arizona.

All right, this week's publication goes out to Will Roy, aka the Poetic Prisoner. Happy Birthday Will! It's not only his birthday, today is also the day Will is totally free of the system. He's off parole! What a great 25th birthday gift! As long as Will has been apart of the juvenile justice system, almost ten years now, The Beat Within has been apart of his life in someway shape or form. When Will first came into the juvenile justice system, many years ago, as a fifteen year old, The Beat was conducting workshops in his old haunt aka B5 max unit in SF/YGC. Right off the bat Will touched us with his thoughtful poems and rhyme schemes, earning him praise within our tiny pages before there was even a POW, a CoPOW, standout, BWOs etc. Well, Will marches off to CYA and does his best to remain in contact with us as he does the CYA tour. As he nears parole with the assistance of his aunt we reconnect. And upon being placed on parole we give Will a part time job at The Beat Within, which over time has grown and grown with more and more responsibility. Today Will Roy the Poetic Prisoner is not only a colleague, he's a great, great friend and a prime time Beat player that truly gets "it" (The Beat Within). Period. Yes indeed Will gets it! And absolutely, Will is free of the criminal justice system today! Congrats to you old friend, see you tomorrow at The Beat and we'll see you readers next week with yet another fabulous edition of the mighty Beat.

We'll leave you with one of Will's earliest Beat contributions...

Home Is Freedom
Between you and me
My opinion is home is a place to be free
Home is going to the kitchen for a snack
Without having someone constantly on your back
A place to kick off your shoes and pick at your feet
And if you are cold you can get up and turn on the heat
Home is a place where it is fun to be alone
Because at any given time you can hop on the phone
Nothing is better than your own bed
With the softest pillow in the house under your head
Or waking up to mom's home cooking
You go into the kitchen and gets to lookin'
Pancakes, biscuits, eggs and bacon
Your little brother yells, "that's what mom's is making."
You sit down, eat and start the conversation up
While pouring Kool-Aid into a Mickie D's cup
Bumping 2Pac non-stop
Playing Super Nintendo
Mastering all the games 'cause you're a pro
Dodging your mom's assumption
Of you doing wrong
While reciting the words to 2Pac's song
Writing your own rhymes to his beat
when you get it down
it is certainly a treat
now tell me home isn't the place to be
because when you are home
that 's when you're free.

And yes Will, you are so free, congrats and happy birthday.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: Well, well, well, we think it is time to promote Ms. Wadud from showcasing her thoughts in the Counselor's Corner to giving her, her own column, Ms. Wadud's Corner! This fine counselor is terrific. She is no joke. The real deal when it comes to counseling the young people. We have had the privilege to know Ms. Wadud for a number of years now, and from the get go, she has been dazzling us, the young people and her colleagues during the workshops and always, always finding the time to write The Beat Within. Thank you for sharing the love with us all Ms. Wadud. From this point forward you will have your own column. So look out for Ms. Wadud's Corner, and for the rest of you counselors, well, well, well....

Facing Your Fears

My biggest fear growing up, besides my fear of the awesome Power and wrath of God was my fear of losing one of my family members to death.

I am in no way afraid of death and I am secure in my belief about what happens to righteous people when they die, I just never wanted to experience the grief. The loss of a husband or wife, mother, or father, brother or sister or child is just total destruction of your heart.

Well it came to pass when I lost my mom on Mother's Day this year. Just knowing that she was going to die was such unbearable pain I could never begin to describe it. The blessing was that I was able to be with her for her last eight days of her life here. But, watching her die was the most traumatic, horrible, just the worst thing I've ever experienced.

So my biggest fear came to pass and I survived. Guess I'm back to just fearing God.

-Ms. Wadud, 150 Crew Counselor

PIECES OF THE WEEK

We

we all face trials and tribulations
fightin' like two nations
but we're killing ourselves
puttin' our names on the history shelves
when we gone, what's left behind
what will our seeds be able to find
other than these graves we make
all the lives we take
all the things we fake
when will all you wake
and see the light of the day
the beautiful bay
but not behind these walls
dialing these collect calls
we say the system got us trapped
that's what we say in rap
but it ain't no fact
we like to keep the hood intact
so we do what we do
and we act a fool
not listening to moms, not going to school
but really think about it, real deep
some of us can't even go to sleep
this is our lives and we playing for keeps
we gotta keep our heads up, stop looking at our feet
but if y'all ain't wit' it, then i ain't part of we
i'm'a just be myself, that's what i'm destined to be

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now you're spitting truth like you're the living proof that a man will take a stand even if he stands alone while a boy will follow wherever the other boys roam, and a boy can never call his heart his home. Still we believe there is a "we" reading your words in this Beat, those who like you are ready to raise their eyes and realize a higher destiny than kill or be killed like a soldier in a war where boys never grow to be men even if they do grow older and carry adult charges on their shoulders.

Restless Soul

When I was in "Boys' Control", I would always wake up and feel another presence in my room. I felt this presence — pain! I would look out my cell sometimes and see this boy walk through the hallway and look me right in my eyes. Then he would disappear.

I feel sorry for him, knowing he will never be in peace but will roam the earth until Judgment Day. This boy had so much pain and anger when I looked into his eyes. I don't even think that he realizes he is dead!

I woke up one last time, to a freezing dead-air room. I looked outside and saw this boy walking again through the hallway. I tried to get his attention. Then he looked at me and walked up to my door. Oh shhh! It was me!

-Sharky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To be in the room where Gaston aka Popeye died, has got to be a spooky experience, when you know he died there in the same room you're in. And then your little story takes an imaginative leap when, perhaps only dreaming you're awake, you see him, call him over and suddenly realize it is you! His pain is your pain, so his face is your face! Terrific, if sad and scary, piece! But we believe deeply that you have what it takes to change your life and that you are well on your way to doing it.

Fear Myself

fear comes in many different ways
most people fear physical pain
some people say
"the worst fear comes from your brain"
'cause you can make yourself scared of anything you want
be it death, animals, numbers or cops
i'm not really afraid of nothin' or no one else
to tell the truth all i fear is my potential and strength
and how i could help or hurt myself

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's interesting that you say you fear not only how your potential and strength could hurt you but also how it could help you (unless you mean it is the uncertainty as to which it will do that causes you fear). Many of us, have what is called "fear of success" because it brings both unfamiliar problems and stress. In this case, FDR's words ring true: "The only thing to fear, is fear itself." 'Cause the unfamiliarity will disappear over time if you don't undermine yourself in order to drop the stress. Too many end up choosing the familiar pain of failure, like an addict's habit.

An Ugly Fear

Being alone
The dark shadows come closer
Footsteps ringing in my ears
The feeling of air blowing in
The back of your head
Hands reaching in from everywhere
Your heart beating fast thump, thump, thump....
Sweat drips from your forehand
The sound of screams that you can't hear
Internal sickness
Wanting to die that very moment
You feel hands in unwanted places
Holding it all in but you
Really want to tell
Violated from the inside out
The person you once thought was close
But was so far away
Life long memories and scars
From those days
The thought of it happening
To my younger sisters
Being alone
In the dark
Having fear.

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Makayla, powerful writing. You've really captured the essence of fear in your words. What are you fears? Nature instills fear in us to protect us. We are in trouble when we become callous to violence. Face your fears, but know which ones will benefit you.

Fear

As a child, I really didn't fear little things, like the boogie man, dark rooms, and going to the dentist, because it was bigger things in the neighborhood I was living in. Only time I felt safe was when the police would be outside, and that's when I would walk up the hill at night time.

I'm telling you, it was so hectic in my neighborhood when I was a little girl growing up. I used to fear losing my brothers and I still do. It's a dirty world. Wasn't any time for my brothers to be slippin' and making mistakes, because it wasn't and still ain't a game in these streets. Anybody could get the business at any time from anybody.

I be in so much fear, because I don't only have to watch the people around me, but I also got to watch the people away from me. And I still haven't overcome this fear, and I don't think I ever will.

-Muck GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very well written piece about what it's like growing up in the 'hood for a child — and especially a child with sense. It's children who stop being afraid of what you describe who pose the most danger to themselves. Did you ever talk to your brothers about your fears? Did you talk to the other children in the neighborhood? How do you deal with this fear? When your child arrives, how will you make sure that she feels safe?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Your Body Is Your Temple

My mom always told me "your body is your temple."
So I can't understand why these girls act like giving it up is so simple.
Don't these girls know that their virginity is all they have?
Once they give it up they'll never have it again.
And in case you didn't know sex without marriage is a sin.
Quick to open they legs and do the do.
The sad thing is they don't care wit who.
He can have HIV, STD, or whatever.
Just because you using a condom don't make it no better.
Because it can break at any time then you go be at the clinic in the medicine line.
Hiding your face, so no one won't see you crying inside, wishing it wasn't true.
Being naïve the whole time thinking it couldn't happen to you.
But guess what girl?
It is possible to change yo' life, you don't got to live wrong.
You can live right.
Have some respect for yourself.
Tell him you not about to lay down and you not a hoe.
Whatever you used to do was in the past, and from now on, you have more class.
I do understand some of y'all never had a mom to tell you what you should and shouldn't do.
But guess what? I'm in the system too. So I'm no better than you.
Just never chose that path because my mom taught me better.
So I chose to sell dope thinking it was clever
Until I got locked up for possession of sales.
And that's when it dawned on me that I was going to jail.
But anyways back to the subject
Thinking giving it up is simple
Sorry to say honey but sex ain't pop that pimple
And remember boo "your body is your temple"

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you on behalf of all the ladies. Thank you for not judging your sisters. This is an important message presented in a compassionate way. The wonderful thing is that your message really boils down to, it's not too late to turn yourself around. And that message can apply to anything, not just sex.

Rock Bottom With Drugs

Well I have a history with drugs. I started using when I was eleven years old, with my mom. My drugs were crystal myth and marijuana.

I hit rock bottom when I was 15 years old. I had used straight for four years.

One day I didn't want to live for the drug anymore, I wanted to live for myself. I got into a rehab when I had just turned 15. When I look back on my life today I'm grateful that I wanted to stop so early in my life. There are some addicts that have used for 20 years. So I'm thankful that God showed me the way!

Today I accept that I'ma addict and I will be for the rest of life. I have been clean almost a year, it will be on Aug. 1st. I'm proud of my life today when it comes to my sobriety. I'm still am learning to live life on life's terms.

-Samantha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are a very brave young lady. We don't know what it was that made you choose to go clean, but it's rarely a choice that youngsters make. You should be very proud of yourself! Not only did you overcome your own addiction, but you were able to do it even when you had role models leading you in the wrong direction. We hope that you will continue on your path and we believe you can become a positive role model for others.

What I Fear

I fear... that one day I will look back at my life and be like, "What the...? I really didn't do shhh and the stuff I did do was pointless, even though it seemed right or cool at the time." I'm afraid that when I die, God will ask me what I did with my talents and time, and no answers come to my mind. I'm scared that I will be seventy and cold and lonely, walking down the street, and everyone pretends they don't know me. I'm terrified that I'll be on the outside looking in at the feast of my kin living in sin.

-David B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Is there something about this clear insight you have when you stare into the future that keeps you from changing this picture? Are you afraid enough that you will stop doing whatever it is that brought you here? Or is it a question of wanting to change, but not knowing how? We would like you to put that excellent mind of yours into gear to think about what it is that you need most to help you out of the nightmare you fear — and then to seek the help you need.

Fear Of Losing You

I had a dream that you were in a coffin
Lying there in death, I saw you and I didn't have to breathe
I made you stress, you felt like your advice was less
Now I feel depressed.
I am sober and clean
And thinking about the way I was mean.
The way I treated you like shhh and at times I wish you left.
I regret what I said. I am scared of losing you
And remember I will appreciate you 'till the DAY I DIE,
Because I'm not here for the rest of my LIFE
I have more time ahead of me than I have behind me
And I pray to some higher power that you could stay.
Dear mama, I will love and care for you for the rest of your and my days

-Lil' Payasa, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: One of the things that happens when we're sober, after years of being in a fog, is to realize who we have hurt, and to want to make amends. That is a sign of real recovery, and not just recovery from addiction but recovery of live itself. Your fear of your mother's passing is one that all of us have, because there is no one closer than a mother to a child (and there's no greater loss when it happens, at any age). So you are right to make the most of the time you have with her, and that means to make the most of your life. We know your mother must be so proud of you for being who you are. We know we are, too.

It is possible to change yo' life,
you don't got to live wrong.
You can live right.
Have some respect for yourself.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

What Is Life?

Life is a struggle to get through.
Society's bullshhh.
No matter where you are,
you have to struggle
to get out what is needed
to live today.
You need to get money,
food and a place to live at.
If you got a family,
then you got to worry
about ten times your problems.
If you become rich,
then you can start to live.
It's sad
because if society wasn't so messed up,
everyone could live without being rich and having money.
When there wasn't governments,
people caught their own food,
made their own houses,
and took care of their own families.
It's sad
we need money to do that properly.
The meaning of life is always changing,
based on what society makes it.
One day I hope
it doesn't take bullshhh to be able to live
life to the fullest
Some people can get away,
but they always struggling to live.

-Ben, Marin

From The Beat: Maybe life is a struggle for everyone, no matter how rich you are, do you think that's possible, Ben? Even the wealthy get fatally ill, have kids in trouble, succumb to alcohol and drug addictions, have kids in the military during war they worry about, feel purposeless, hopeless. There are a whole lot of things money can't cure. Do you think it would be better if you had to fish, hunt animals and/or plant vegetables and fruit trees in order to eat? Go to a stream every morning to gather water to drink, bathe and wash your clothes and dishes? Maybe you're right.

My Life is Hard

When I only got one mom to look up to
My life is hard
When my dad ain't 'round to tell me what to do
It's even harder
Knowin' he's not gon' be there
He's semi-rich and he don't even care
He has a son that's 'bout to be grown
He goin' 'round like I'm not his, he owns
My life is hard
But can't no one see
Every day I'm sad
But I walk 'round like I'm happy
I know my dad
And he know me
But he's not there
To show me how to be a man
My life is hard
And I really ain't playin' mom ask him to come visit me
But he said he's not goin' nowhere near Juvy
I wish he could be there
My life will always be hard
My whole life
And my dad "Mr. Converse"
Doesn't seem to care

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wonder what kinds of terrible things your father must have gone through, to be so twisted that he would deny himself the pride and joy of getting closer to this son of his. He doesn't get to read your poetry, meet his granddaughter, feel the love of a father for his children... what a loss. We know that in your heart you must feel hurt by him, but looking from the outside, we feel so much sorrier for him than for you. You have a whole future ahead of yourself, and with all your struggles, you are a young man that a father would be proud to have in his heart, just as we are proud to have you in our pages. So in the end, who is the person who loses the most? Your father is the one who has lost. And believe us, no matter what he may pretend, or how much he may hide it, he cares. But in many ways, he must be a broken man. That won't happen to you – you have the strength to keep yourself from breaking. Now use that strength.

Every day I'm sad
But I walk 'round like I'm happy
I know my dad
And he know me
But he's not there
To show me how to be a man
My life is hard

I Will Not Be Beat

For most of my life I have seen an ordeal
From once loving the streets and then sold in a deal.
Confused and betrayed trapped without choice
A lost alone young soul eleven years without a voice
The pain was unmatched yet the fear was unborn
Through the scars on my wrists see another soul torn
Mommies too drugged up, daddy just won't see
Your daughter's life's not worth the money earned of just two G's
You think your scared and waste some years
While the streets grow greed and the eye's less tears
To grow up fast you become your fears
Have you been beat
Then grown ashamed of what the mirror reveals
I'll still hold my head up high
For that's what I've done
The road that brought me down has made me what I've become
I am proud and will never retreat
You can't force my head down
I will not be beat
My spirit stays strong and my inner strength has been found
And when life got hard and my life complicated I turned to myself
Because that's what life painted.

-Lateese Durango, Maricopa County

From The Beat: It sounds as if things have been tough for you, to this point, but it also sounds as if you've got the courage to make some positive changes. Life can deal us any verity of hands and we can play them in any number of ways. You have the power within you to choose what is best for you and we hope those lessons from the past help guide you down the safest most rewarding path, for you.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Beat

The Beat, The Beat
It'll sweep you off yo' feet
From the poems comin' out of The Beat
The Beat, The Beat,
It'll have you flowin' wit' me
From my poems flowin' out The Beat

My poems go straight to The Beat,
Not the beat a song make
But The Beat Within
And my poems is never fake.
They'll make you clap and grin
The Beat come so you can express yo'self
Say what you wanna say
Don't care 'bout no one else
I talk 'bout anything
From my female
To my winning team
From the drug sale
To the infra-red beam
The Beat know 'bout me

I'm the poem king
The Beat respond to what you write
Good or Bad
The Beat come Tuesday night
You shouldn't be mad
The Beat gon' have yo' back
You can still talk about carryin' a strap
Sellin' the crack
Even bustin' the mack
But The Beat gon' write something good back
I can write a poem about The Beat, even a rap
They like your best friend that got yo' back
The Beat is like them cars we ride back to back
The Beat is my strap

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-Ally-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can we say, except that you and our wonderful writers would all be here without The Beat, but we would never be here without all of you. So now who is that sweeps who off their feet?

Do Over

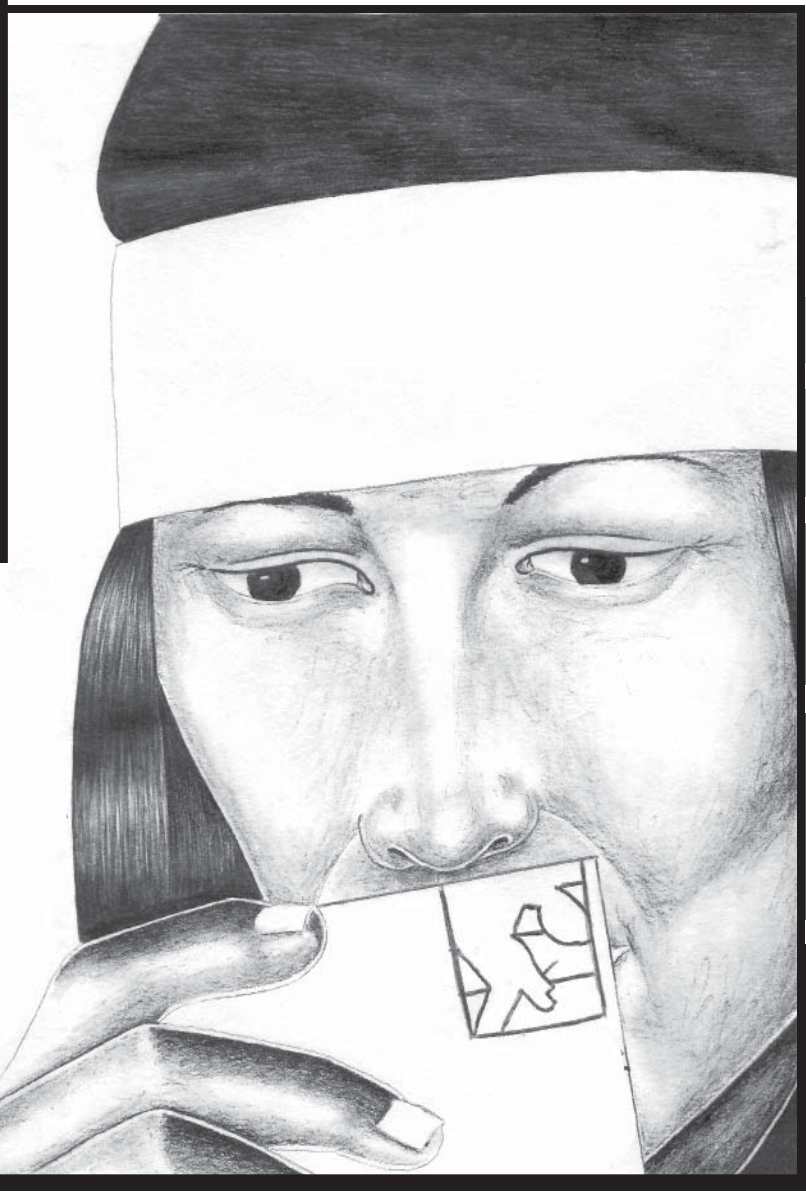
If I could do over one thing it would be getting locked up in the halls. I would want to do this over because I shouldn't be here in this predicament. I should be at school somewhere playing basketball, not fighting a possession of crack case.

But I'm light-weight happy that I came here because in those few days I was here I've done a lot of thinking on what I wanna do when I get out, and I decided that I was going to Job Corps and get my high school diploma. I will start a career as a electrician, a carpenter or, last and least, a security guard — hopefully the first and second.

I want to do something with my life because I have a daughter on the way and I want her to see that her pops is someone see can look up to. So that is what I would like to do over. To those reading, don't be like me, a do-over guy. Just don't do it, a'ight.

-Omari B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, you shouldn't be in here fighting a case when you could be out there going to school and preparing yourself to be the father you want to be. But, Omari, we don't agree with your advice for readers not to be like you, "a do-over guy," because we would be proud of anyone who was like you and took this as a wake-up call to move his life in a different direction! If you didn't use this time as you have to think about your future and make some positive decisions, then we would agree not to follow your model. But what you are doing is all that we can ask anyone to do — think about their lives, think about what they want in the world, think about their future children. We are so proud of you, and whatever happens with this case, don't lose your focus. Whether it takes a month or a year, you have begun a new journey with a much brighter destination. Congratulations!



I've done a lot of thinking on what I wanna do when I get out, and I decided that I was going to Job Corps and get my high school diploma.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

RIP Cell is what I say as I lay in my room day by day

As I ask God why he had to take Cell's life away
But I know Cell will tell me when I meet him at them gates
As I pray to God that all my bras and sisters from the ins and outs will be ok
But as we all know this pain is here to stay
RIP Cell is what we say
When I look at my arm, RIP Cell is what I see
And I look again and say can this really be?
Tell me it isn't true, tell me Cell didn't lose his life to these cold mean Oakland streets.
But it is all true. Cell's heart will never beat again
but only God knows why he put Cell in eternal sleep
And yes I can't lie: deep down inside it makes me want to cry
As I ask if you ask me it wasn't his time to fly in the sky
It's like someone took away my eye
It will never be the same now that we lost Marcellus to this effed up game
As we walk through this hell day, RIP Cell is what we'll say.
We miss you bra and you'll never be forgotten
So as I lay my head on this dirty ass bed and start to pray,
"May God rest Marcellus'soul" is what I'll say, till my days on earth are complete.
Sunrise 6/19/1987
Sunset 2/16/2006

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so honored you have used The Beat's pages to share your grief over your friend week after week. As you keep writing, though, don't forget about the life you have to live. Now it's time to focus on your life, living it, staying alive, thriving, being a friend and brother, and deciding where you want to be five years, ten years from now: on the streets, in the ground, or truly free?

Because We Are Simple Beings

Fear brings out the worst
Fear is constant; fear is and always will be
Fear of death keeps us safe
Fear of life puts us away
Fear of dark brings light
Fear of fear brings only fear
Fear of loss, fear of change, fear of heights and fear of pain —
keep us, who we are
We are simple beings
Who will always live with fear
And as long as there is life
We will overcome fear

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have no fear of paradoxes... And we admire that. What fears have you overcome? What fears do you still wish to overcome? How do you think fear of God works (or doesn't work) in the people you know?

Manchild In The Promised Land

How can I talk?
But cannot speak.
My expressions answer your question
About my defeats
And when defeated
It seems no one cares
But I still seek
Opportunity in the air
A man-child alone with burdens to bear.

Though bridges may burn,
And tables may turn
Time will never return.

I question myself
But I ask the unanswerable
Better left unsaid
It's too substantial.

I pray my pain subsides
hopes and dreams, collide
My shouts and praise reach high
And touch the clearest of the sky
But what I search for must be in disguise.

I see my tears, but hear no cries
Pain is falling from my weary eyes
If you gon live...you know you gon die
If you like to steal... you know you gotta lie.

I just take my time tryin' to learn how to survive
I hope you hear me Lord
'Cause one day...
I'll arrive.

-G B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What are your hopes and dreams, and are they colliding with each other or with what you must deal with as reality? This is a powerful poem of that reality, and one which reminds us of just how hard it must be to adjust to a world you did not create, but which you still must survive in. Yet, you provide some fine advice, even for yourself, like taking your time to learn, and questioning life and yourself and the things that others expect from you. We can't say that your prayers will be answered, but without the questions, there can be no answers. You bring a sharp intelligence to this difficult task, and it is our prayer that through that intelligence and patience (and some luck), you will find a way to move into a different future, one that will let you look back and reflect, and perhaps write about the strength and sense of responsibility it took to get you through.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Had To Hit Back . . . Or Did I?

He hit my patna, what I was supposed to do?
I had to hit him back
Swing, crack,
His jaw crack.
Yes I got back and then ... I got wrapped.
Pause-rewind... "do over"
I wish I could do it over
And maybe if I were sober
My mind wouldn't have been cluttered.
But I was on, and his face looked like butter
My hand was like a knife
I had to strike
Damn! now I've hit rock bottom
Wish I could do it over.

-Dawn B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire the honesty in this piece, Dawn, and the fact that you have enough insight to realize that by putting your mind under the control of a drug (alcohol — one of the most dangerous of them all), you let yourself be led here. But if you take this knowledge and act on it from this point forward, then you're on your way up from that low point, and there's no limit on how high you can reach — if you stay sober and focused. Let this be the real "pause" — the pause that comes not before rewind, but the one that comes before forward.

Can I Get A Do-Over?

If I could have a do-over, I would do over life itself. I would go back to the day my best friend died. Instead of telling him to meet me down the street, I would have told him to meet me at my house; or maybe I would've just took ammo and shot first; but that would've ended up wrong too!

I would have went back to the day before my sister-in-law was killed, because we ended our last moments together in sort of an argument with each other. Every time I think of it now it hurts my heart. I would go back to the day my older brother-figure died. Instead of telling him to be safe, I would've asked him to go in the house.

And last, but not close to least, I would go back to the days my clique member was livin'. I would have given myself a chance to get to know him better so I could have good memories and not just pictures of him on his obituary. But I guess its like I said in a poem and everyone else says, life is a bitch, and then you die. But why do the good die young? RIP Young Rell; RIP Greshaunda; RIP Big Webb; RIP Cell.

-Chop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right that shooting first would have ended wrong, too. Really, you probably need to take all of your do-over's way farther back, back to where you and your loved ones got off track — or maybe you were on the track that came naturally, but then you needed to blaze a new trail, 'cause this one leads to dying young or growing old in jail. If those who passed could come back and speak to you, they'd say it's not too late for Chop to change the things he do. Make sure when you're released you don't do over the same old mistakes in the street.

i'll fight wit' you till the day i die
i'll be there when your family cries
don't get it twisted you gotta return the love
'cause i got a witness from above

Homies

real homes ride
when funk happens who will run and hide
and who will stick to it to the end
is our bond strong enough that it won't break but bend
would you choose a female over your bro's
if so — why — when we can get many of those
a true friend is hard to get
so i make the right choices that i won't regret
i'll fight wit' you till the day i die
i'll be there when your family cries
don't get it twisted you gotta return the love
'cause i got a witness from above
but when i'm locked up are you gonna write
were we that close, were we that tight
things i did for you, all those fights
getting drunk and high all those nights
growing up in the hood putting in work
runnin' from the cops when we hear the blurp
man thangs have hella changed since i've been away
you couldn't come through when i moved across the bay
but screw it now i said what i gotta say

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When things get twisted and old friends act like all those old times never existed and you start to untangle the knot, when you start to untwist the snarled up emotions you've got — don't do it just halfway and stop. The whole vision was hallucinatory, riding and fighting and getting high and drunk, that brothers-in-arms affection when you survive the funk, all those homies-forever down-for-whatever stories — you've got to cut loose, not just the individuals who failed to come through but the whole life vision that you were living, too. Real homies learn the hard way to be a man, you've got to outgrow all those myths about the gang, put the soldier-boy movie back in the can — get a job, raise a family, make a plan and follow through. Now you've learned the hard way, don't go back to what you used to do.

They build prisons
and jails for we human beings
Slavery will never end

I'm Reminiscin' On The Years That Passed

When I was young, never had a clue
Never even had a dream
But at the time, I was a baby
Gettin' advice from elder ladies
It never took me that long to find out I was a slave
Family been slave by the master of slave
Send to the grave
Got booked on the soul train
My mama told me a lot, so did my grand mama
I learn a little here, a little there
Take me far
It's not the place I came from, it's where I'm heading
I do appreciate the fact that I gained knowledge, sophisticated
Thank God who helped me make it
Up 'til this day, you best believe slavery still exist
They build prisons and jails for we human beings
Slavery will never end
You gotta elevate, open your eyes
Don't let 'em fool you with their dirty lies

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: In what form do you think modern slavery still exists? Is it because you're in juvy, you feel like a slave? Then again, why should you feel like a slave? You broke the law? No? Do you feel when you are on the outs again, that you'll still be a slave? If so, to whom? School? Society? The judicial system? To work? To God? Is there any way people can free themselves forever? If so, how? How can you free yourself from everything, for good?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

This Dream Girl Of Mine

this girl of mine is not only fine as aged wine
but she takes her time to understand my mind
her conversation flows like a river
listening to her speak makes my soul shiver
this girl of mine is solid
and her intelligence lets everyone know
she's tasted plenty of apples from the tree of knowledge
her words are like sweet jazz to my ears
in her presence i have no fears
she's my friend to the very end
she's my therapist when i feel like
the weight of the world is on my shoulders
you know that special person that won't leave until you understand
that she is my girl and i am her man
this girl of mine provides me heaven on earth
even before birth
this girl of mine goes to church
and even when she doesn't go
she still know how to praise the lord on his own
she studies the word and try her best to apply it to her life
she says she wants to be grounded before i makes her my wife.
this girl of mine draws my bath, rubs my feet
she cooks me meals and even cuts my meat
this girl takes care of me, a blind man can see
mentally, spiritually and physically, oooo-weee
she takes good care of me
i truly believe that no other girl on this earth can
touch me or love me the way she can
because this is my girl
when she say she "loves me" and she mean just that
when we make love we call it "love-makin'"
and she knows that i'm hers for the takin'
she can have me anytime, anyway and anyplace
she can even get the tonsils, all she have to do is say
i'll do it right all night if she wants
'cause she deserves it with all she does for me
besides the physical love i know this girl cares for me
and she loves me more than she does herself
how do I know this
'cause she's shown me this daily
for over four-and-a-half years never changing, never complaining
— baby i love you
every day hasn't been perfect but that's fine
you'll always be that girl of mine

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we read about how your heart bleeds 'cause you don't receive the love that you need or in which you need to believe, and then there are days like this, when the clouds part and you see in your heart that the love was always there for you 'cause she always continued to care for you. Not even these lengthy days of your juvenile prison stay can wear away the bedrock of your mutual devotion, 'cause your love for each other is as large and eternal as the Pacific Ocean, even if your heart sometimes gets confused by its constant motion.

she's tasted plenty of apples
from the tree of knowledge
her words are like sweet jazz to my ears
in her presence i have no fears
she's my friend to the very end

I Wish

I wish I could go back into life an' change my behavior an' all the bullshhh. If I could change, I would change my attitude, my behavior, my disrespect against people. That's what I would change is all that, because all that shhh ain't go' get you nowhere. It's going to get you hurt an' somewhere else.

-Joshua B1

From The Beat: When we read this, Joshua, it seems clear to us that you have already changed your attitude. And while that change cannot erase the past, it can definitely rewrite the future. The most important ingredient for change is the desire to do it. Clearly, you've past that point. Now do it!

Ladies Don't Be A Fool

Don't let him talk you into
something that you don't wanna do
Don't sell your body
Just to make him love you
If he really cared
Then he wouldn't have you out there
Risking your life
Selling your body for a price
Lets be serious
That's not what you wanna do
But you think you down for him
And what he say is true
Don't be stupid
I'm not a hoe and I even know
He don't care about you
Just by the stories you tell
Seem to me he putting you through hell
Honestly, have anything he told you came true?
I bet you thinking
'Damn, when is what he promised me
Go come through?"
Well, guess what? It's not!
And you standing out there on that
Corner is hella hot
You think the police ain't out there
Scoping you out?
Girl, it ain't go be long before you come to jail and see what he really about
He don't love you and he ain't yo' man
If his patnas ask who you was
He'd be like "that's my hoe, damn"
Oh is you surprised?
Because you shouldn't be
The whole time you was just
Another ho on his team
Helping him eat
How I know all this?
Because I got a brother and cousins
They put me up on game
So I won't be sold cheaper by the dozen
But I know one thing is
I'd never stoop that low
I wouldn't give a dude that privilege
To ever call me a ho
I'm not go disrespect
Because you do what you do
I'm just saying
Ladies don't be a fool.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Again, thank you for showing support for your sisters. You're absolutely right. What all those girls out there need is to know that their sisters support and respect them and that they can respect themselves. Maybe they were never taught to respect themselves. Maybe even the opposite. Iyshawn, it sounds like you have some important work to do supporting your sisters. Get out there and do it! What do you suggest for those stuck in this game and want out? What steps should they take?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Them Fears

I feared a lot when I was a kid. I feared butterflies when they got too close to me 'cause I thought they'd bite me — I thought they had teeth!

I feared dogs, other people's dogs. I had dogs, too. Sometimes I'd go to dog-training classes with my friend, Julius. His dad trained dogs. One time a dog was let off his chain, and he started chasing me, and I ran. I ran up a pile/hill of wood chips, but the dog caught me and bit me in the ass — hell yeah it hurt! I still remember that! The dog's name was Candy. It was a Doberman, too.

Also I feared the dark. I hated to be alone when it was dark 'cause I'd start to hear things in the house, like someone walking up the stairs or someone over by the windows or they'd be trying to get in the door! So, I used to grab a stick or something like that and hop under my covers clutching my "weapon". Then I'd slowly fall asleep. When I'd wake up, my family would be there.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You not only tell us about two things that used to scare you when you were young, you tell it in a way that makes us understand your fear — and maybe remember our own similar fears as a child. Good piece, well told/written.

In Jail

As the days go by in jail, they are sometimes very slow.
That's why you have to keep yourself occupied.
Then, you will see the days going by like the wind
when it passes through the air
the worst thing about coming to jail is getting used to it.
When you first come, that's when it seems like the day is
never going to come to an end.
Also, when you sit in jail, you try to sleep,
then wake up to see if the next day is coming soon,
but it seems like it is taking forever to come.
That's why you keep yourself occupied
by reading or just working out in your room,
so that time will fly past,
and before you know it, the day has ended and the next day
begun.

-Romell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've really captured the "jail experience" beautifully. And what an ugly picture! Where will you be tomorrow?

It's Really A Shame

This time I came to the hall I was like "damn." It's twenty girls in the unit and over half of them is here for prostitution. It's really a shame. Whatever happened to loving yourself and self-respect? Most of these girls have none and it sad. They let these dudes, who are suppose to be their so-called boyfriends talk them into it. Man, I honesty have no respect what so ever for them. I see it like this, if he think that y'all need money so bad why can't he get out there and sell his body? If he love you why do he have you out there risking our life like that? Girl it's not love it's all part of the game.

Love do not hurt and it definitely don't make you hate or despise yourself. I know that anybody out there don't love their selves because if you did you wouldn't be out there. Y'all come in here and act like you love what you do and like you all high and mighty. But deep down inside you're really hurting. And it's not too late to get out of that life. Trust me it's not.

All it takes is a little love, strength, and courage and from within yourself. Ladies I know that you can do it, I've seen a lot of girls come in here and change. Just think about your parents the their feelings. I bet your mom and dad hates to see that little girl locked up for degrading herself. Just imagine how they felt when they got that call telling them the life that you were living. I'm not going to judge you or put you down because I know you all have been judged enough I'm just saying it's really a shame.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Iyshawn, this is obviously an issue that gets you really worked up. (And rightly so.) Have you ever thought about volunteering at a women's shelter or at an organization that helps prostitutes? This could be good community service on your record, good work experience, and you might have a positive affect on someone else's life. If you're interested, we can look up a few organizations where you might be able to help out and put your passion to good use. Let one of your Beat facilitators know. Until then, keep spilling your truths, we're digging your commentaries.

Rock Bottom Isn't New To Me

I felt that I hit rock bottom before in my life.
Me and my mom never got along.
Me and my dad would get along to a certain extent.
Me and my parents never really had a relationship.
Last year before the last day of school, my boyfriend
died,
he was shot right in front of his house.
I was going through it.
Two months later I got kicked out the house.
I called my dad but he wasn't talking to me at the time.
So I stayed with my god sisters.
Two weeks later I came back home.
Two months later my mom put me out because her
boyfriend didn't want me there.
Me and my dad still weren't talking.
I didn't have any money to my name and didn't have a
place to say.
I ended up staying with my step-dad and sister.

-Can You Hear Me, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It would be impossible for anyone to have gone through what you went through and not feel that they had hit rock bottom. It's hard enough not getting along with your parents (that is really, really hard), but to mourn the violent and senseless loss of someone you love and to not have your parents empathize is beyond scandalous. You may have done and said things that made your parents kick you out (or maybe not), but it is the duty of a good parent to support their child in a time of need like that. You should know that when you get through this, that you are a very strong person. And you should remember what you've learned through all this and turn it around to be your strength and focus in life. We believe you will persevere. Just keep your head up high and know that you are a strong young lady.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Double Trouble, RIP

My rock bottom point was when my best friend got killed. I was feeling like things couldn't get worse, 'cause I grew up with him since we couldn't come off the porch. We was like my brother, cause we been through a lot.

We were so close that we could walk into each other's houses and ask each other's moms to make us food, we always went to the same school, and whenever he was about to get in a fight, I was too. When I was about to get into one, he was too – we was double trouble. But now that he's gone it ain't none of that.

We did so much together....

RIP Davelle Tate, Sunrise: 4/30/89. Sunset: 6/21/05

-Gumaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's amazing how beautifully you captured this friendship, and what Davelle meant to you, in so few short sentences. From the porch to the shared homes to the tragic end — or, as you put it, from Sunrise to Sunset. Our only hope is that since you describe this moment as a rock bottom, that means the pain has lessened a bit, and you've started to climb your way out of the pain. Have you? And if so, how?

Thinking To Myself

Thinking to myself:
will I ever get out,
or will I ever get to see my family
wondering if God will give me a chance
to get out.
I can change my life
go home and be with my little girl.
She'll soon be born into this life
I don't want her to grow up and have a life like I've had.
Well, I know that I am not going home.
That is just a dream to me.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We need our dreams Uriel. Without dreams we are nothing. Continue to dream, and continue to work on your reading and writing. You've made great progress. You are going to be OK. You have a good heart. One day you will be a good example for troubled young people. We have faith in you.

My Life in this Place

Feel like I can't do anything in here
Trapped in this place like I live here
This is not the place for me to be
It feels like hell to me
I can't even see my dauhtger
And that's what's killin' me
Just lookin' at her picture at night
Brings tears to my eyes
I try to hold them back with all my might
I can barely sleep at night
Just thinkin' about what she doing
While I'm in here wondering where I'm going
I hope that it's home – to be with my new family.
So that I can be the father that I said I would be,
I plan to change my life
To do the right thing with my life
And not come back to this place
To have this same silly look on my face
Which would be depressed, because I look a mess
For me this is a bad thing
Because I'm rock bottom and that's all I think about
I'm slowly getting' up little by little
My life in here is a size of a skittle
So for me going from rock bottom to being not rock bottom
Is what I'm tryin' to do
To get out this place is the thing to do.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece helped us figure out one of the key elements of great writing. It's when the person is so gifted that even if they're talking about something horrible and heartbreaking, like you do when you describe your pain in here, and the wrenching separation from your daughter – they can still make you laugh in appreciation of their originality when they choose their words. "My life in here is a size of a skittle" did just that – made us smile even though we'd wanted to cry just a few lines above. This is the magic of writing and art – it can shine a light even in our darkest hour. Thanks for sharing this magic with The Beat readers.

for me going from rock bottom to being
not rock bottom
Is what I'm tryin' to do

Lost

i lost everything
from my girl to my car
now my freedom seems so far
i'm trapped in here
like a bug in a jar
i look up at night
and wish upon a star
but it really don't matter today
as long as my family is doing okay
but my soul is theirs
it's here to stay
this is real life
not no movie, no play
i put shame in my family name
i think it's time to get out of the game
before i'm the one to blame
for a lost life
i can't do more shame.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the Gospel it says you must lose your life to find it, and it sounds like that's exactly what is happening to you. Quit the game. For you have the rest of your life to bring a feeling of pride to your family name.

Hurricane Katrina:

I Was There (Part One)

Let me start off by saying did yo' boy from New Awlins, 'ya heard me."

I came out here to The Bay after the Hurricane. During the storm it wasn't scary at all to me. During that time, it was me and my mom and my pregnant sister, and her one year old daughter.

When the storm first hit it wasn't nothin'-- it was just a little rain and some strong wind. The first thing that happened , the lights went out and that wasn't cool, ya heard me. Also when that happen man, it was hot as I don't know what, ya boy couldn't even sleep ya hear, cause I was in the projects.

Later on the streets started to fill with a little water, during that time. When I woke up the next morning, the water started to rise cause the flood gates had broke. I'm gonna tell you the rest some other time 'cause it's lot mo' ya heard me?

-New Orleans Boy, 15 0 Crew

From The Beat: We are eagerly awaiting the rest of your story. There have been too many descriptions of Katrina from people who just headed down with their camera crews, who stepped in and stepped out... but you are the true witness, and your voice needs to be heard. Thanks for this cliffhanger first installment! To be continued...

Like That?

Damn Fresh
Is it like that?
It thought we was cool
Why you had to go bad
I can't believe you told him all of that
What really bootsy
Is you put it on thick
Like I'm just really
A scandalous chick
That really shouldn't be
How you feel
That night you wasn't even
Keeping it real
I found out you had hella work
And a BM
Damn, you wasn't satisfied
With all of them
I feel you though
You was gone for a minute
But what I don't feel is
You was tryna hit it
Was you really? Well guess what?
"This gurl Iyshawn don't ever give up the butt!"
Straight up!
You see now I had him so in love
While I was in this unit
Pure as a white dove
This should be a lesson to all
Of you other girls
To make him love you
You don't have to give up the pearl.
Anyway back to Darnell
You should already know I go
So when I see you again
you already know
Because on the outs
I will be back
With the same question
"Darnell is it like that?

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hmmm...this seems like a story that you have to know to comment on, so we'll leave to you and those in the know. We sense it's all about respect and that who you are and what you are all about.

One Do Over

If I could have one do over it would be the day I ever got with me ex-boyfriend. He dragged me down so much and it's the reason I'm back up today the only thing that I am grateful for is the strength he gave me, and the relationship I grew with my current boyfriend.

-Sara, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's great, just so long as you know that you have the strength in you to pull yourself up without the help of a boyfriend (not that we want to downplay the importance of a support network).

We Still Got A Chance

We still got a chance
if we just do what we gotta do
stop thinking about getting money
and just go to school
get an education so that
we can learn the techniques
to get it the right way
go get a real job
so we can really get paid
forget selling dope
and robbing people's families
taking food off people's tables
and robbing their grannies
do to others what you want done to yourself
you want yo' momma robbed?
Then don't rob nobody else
Straight up!
Stop tryna fit in
Because where is yo' friends
Gon' be when you get locked up again?
They go be on the out stalling
Somebody else into doing something
The same thing that got you nothing
But just because we in jail
Don't mean
We can't rise and stand
Because no matter what
We still got a chance

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Here, here. Bravo! Girl, you should be a preacher or something. Maybe you can start with working in the community. We see you as a leader. Take charge of your role. And let us know what we can do to help. (But first you have to keep your booty out of CYA/the system!)

you want yo' momma robbed?
Then don't rob nobody else
Straight up!

My Father I Feared

I have always felt a fear of my father, not a fear that he would ever beat me or hurt me physically. But I was always scared to get close to him because I knew he would just be going to prison again.

I love my dad, but I don't want to fear getting hurt by him anymore, that's why I've set an invisible barrier and no longer trust him.

-Sara, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have really given this a lot of thought. But thinking and feeling don't always agree with each other. We hope that your dad will not continue to disappoint you, but we applaud your conscious approach to protect yourself.

R-B

I have hit rock bottom in my drug addiction.
I knew I was at that point
when I was doing whatever it took to get it and needed more
and more to satisfy
that need.
I thank the Lord that my best friend and boyfriend (same person) was there
to grab my hand and he's holding it to help me climb up
that hill.
It can only get better from here

-Sara, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's wonderful that you are willing to accept the help of someone else. So many people don't want to admit they are weak even though their addiction is strong. You not only admitted you needed help but you were willing to ask someone for it. That proves how strong you really are.

So Much Pain It's A Lot Anger

If the world could understand
I know it would be a lot better
In the past I commit a couple sins
Got their demons driven through my brain
Tellin' me I'm still the same
I change my life
But I'm gettin' such a big fight
The devil want me dead
Yet still I try to survive
I thank the Lord for giving me the strength
Every day an' night
Am going crazy
Frustrated on a daily basis
Watching the clock
Reminisce on the life I live
I came so far
But sometimes I give up all my hopes
It's pretty over
If I try to go back to my past
Strappin' a gun on the road
Trying to sell some drugs
Ain't got no future for me
It's like a ticket to the penitentiary

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: Your life must seem immensely difficult to you now, Dean. But you're right to fight for justice for yourself. Are you learning a lot throughout this year and a half you've been fighting your case? Are you learning any skills, making any plans for your future so you won't have to sell drugs when you're finally free again? Can you get help setting yourself up with a job? Will you stay in the Bay area? Go back to Florida? Jamaica? What kind of legitimate work appeals to you? Will you go back to school? You're a joy to have in our workshops. You almost always write about the poor kids who live in US city ghettos. We love it when you freestyle. We'll miss you when you're finally free again, but that's where you belong, free!

How I Feel About Ma Mama

I see most people look up to heir mama, but, fo' me, I could care less about my mama. She a two-faced witch. She a liar and don't give a damn about her kids. She might say she do, but I don't believe her. She puts her boyfriend in front of her kids. We should be her life—something she would want to live for, but, to me, it seems like she don't care.

I know that I've messed up a lot and I can't change what I've done, and right now I am in juvenile hall and 'bout to go to placement for about a year. I can't see my boyfriend, can't see my family, and my mama ain't doin' shhh to help me. And that's all I got to say right now.

-Angelica, Marin

From The Beat: You write it as you have experienced it, and we are so sorry, yet glad you can so articulately tell us readers your truths. Thanks. You're going to placement for a year, but what will happen to your younger brothers and sisters? We hope they are in good hands. As for you, well you need to take on the demons that plague you so you can move on with your life. Best of luck in placement. Do not make it a place to chill and kick it, make the next year a year to remember, the year you worked your tail off to get your life back!

We Make Our Own Fears

Every fear's your own creation, whether it was inspired by others or not. They blind you to the point of unfulfilled dreams. Many people sit with this for their entire lives, but is it worth it? This goes for the most innocent fears, to the most severe.

-Lotta, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This is an interesting observation, Lotta, but we'd love for you to provide us some details about what fears have been inspired in you (by others), and what fears you have overcome.

Everything Happens For A Reason

Life is what it turns out to be!
Everythang happens for a reason. I
say everything I have been through in life has really been for a reason.
I've had good and bad and some wonderful things happen to me,
but I've had some horrible, horrible things happen to me!
I thank God for having me go through the horrible things
--it had made me a tougher person inside,
an' the things that hurt me the most made me a sensitive person, in a way.
But for some reason, I never let nobody see he sensitive side,
'cause I'm scared of getting hurt again!
So life is what yo' make it to be.
I can be a bad ass and stay behind bars for the rest of my life,
or I can get my shhh together and do good!
And now I decided to quit lettin' everybody think of me as a bad example
and let 'em know' I can do it! Ha ha.
You thought I couldn't, so do what you t'ink yo' need to do!
Just know you have to deal with the consequences!

-Deanna, Marin

From The Beat: Can you describe some horrible things that have happened to you, maybe events that are not too personal, that taught you lessons you needed to know but wouldn't otherwise have learned, Deanna? Maybe your readers can learn from your experiences without having to suffer them themselves. What will it take for you to do whatever you need to do to change your life for the good? We wish you the very best.

Not Scared

I do not know what I fear. Life's too short to have things that hold you back. Sure, I get spooked sometimes by big, hairy barking dogs behind fences, but fears are for overcoming, so I push myself to do things I'm scared of — relapsing, spiders, mustard.

Sometimes I don't think I'm even scared of death, the ultimate end. I think I'm invincible. I've been through so much. I've overdosed countless times, tried to kill myself many times, seen people die in front of me, and put myself in so many different dangerous situations that I think I can't die. I'm not scared. I just don't want to leave.

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Don't be foolish, Slug. You are not invincible, and the thought that you might be is a legacy of childhood. That you are still alive and writing out of such passion proves to us only that you have an indomitable spirit with a thriving passion to live. Death will come, as it does to all of us, but don't put yourself in situations that speed the process us, thinking it can't happen to you. There is a reason that you are still standing, still striving, still hoping. Maybe your mission is to discover what that reason is. (You're afraid of mustard?)

Life Is What You Make It

What it do? Ya, it's yo' girl, Purplicious, back in the hall because I ended up doing somethin' stupid. But I ain't trippin', 'cause I'm gettin' out soon. I'm going back to placement in Ukiah.

But the topic for today I'm a write about a is, "What Is Life?" Well, to me, life is what you make it. I try to make life easy, but then, there's times when I run into brick walls and fall hard on my ass, but then there's times when I need help to get back on my feet. Like now, I choose to live life on my own, 'cause I don't have a mother or father to help me get on my feet any no more, 'cause they ain't got time for me anymore. (to be continued.)

-Purplicious, Marin

From The Beat: Can you give examples when times/life got hard? Can you tell us who in your life has helped you? Can you speak about how things broke down between you and your parents? What's the plan for a better future?

Un Examen De Dios

Mi vida es normal. Yo soy bueno y malo. Tengo sentimiento que me ayudan a pensar para cada cosa que hago. Yo pienso que mi vida es para que yo sea una buena persona. También pienso que la vida es un examen de Dios para ver si estamos listo para ir con El. El no quiere personas que sean malas y todos debemos que tener una oportunidad para pasar un examen. La verdad no es un juego, solo tienes una vida. Yo sé que en esta vida tienes que pensar. Yo no pensé en la primera vez. Pero voy a tratar de pensar más antes de hacer algo. Voy a tratar de componer todos mis errores. Los veo la otra semana.

From The Beat: Esperamos que de verdad tomes el tiempo de pensar antes de hacer algo que te puede meter en problemas. Tienes que pasar la prueba que Dios te ha puesto para seguir adelante. ¿Crees que puedas pasarla? ¿Que te hace pensar que lo haras? ¿Cual sera la nota? ¿Te ganaras una A de excelente? ¿O F de malo? Todo está en tus manos. Gracias por tus palabras. Sinceramente valoramos lo que dijistes y todo esperamos pasar ese examen.

A Test From God

My life is normal. I am good and bad. I have feelings that help me to think for everything that I do. I think that my life is for me to be a good person. I also think that life is a test from God to see if we are ready to go with Him. He doesn't want people that are bad and we should all have an opportunity to pass a test. The truth is, it's not a game. You only have one life. I know that in this life you have to think. I didn't think the first time, but I am going to try to think more before I do something. I am going to try to fix all my mistakes. I'll see y'all next week.

-Jose B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We truly hope that you take the time to think before doing something that could get you in trouble. You have to pass the test that God has placed before you to continue forward. Do you think you can pass it? What makes you think that you will? What will be your grade? Will you earn an A for excellence? Or an F for failure? Everything is in your hands. Thank you for your words. We honestly value what you mentioned in your piece and we hope we all pass this test.

Lo Que Se Siente Estar Preso

No sé siente nada solo imaginate de que aveces yo pienso que no valgo nada y que quisiera morir antes de tiempo. Quisiera complacerme, pero no puedo. Sabes aveces siento que me ahogo en un lago que no puedo salir. Tu piensalo, puedes ser muy feliz siempre y cuando te alejes de las drogas y problemas. Quiero que esto te sirva como consejo.

From The Beat: Que lindo consejo! Pero conrespecto a lo tuyo, no te des por vencido. Todos en este mundo cometemos errores y hay que saberlos enfrontar. Algún día saldras de este lugar y podras salirte de ese lago el cual no te deja salir a las orilla de la arena. Sigue luchando y gracias por tus palabras.

How It Feels Like To Be Locked Up

It doesn't feel like anything. Just imagine that sometimes, I think that I am worthless and that I would like to die before my time comes. I would like to humor myself, but I can't. You know what? Sometimes I feel like I am drowning in a lake that I cannot get out of. Think about it: You can always be very happy when you distance yourself from the drugs and problems. I want this to serve to y'all as some words of advice.

-Anonymous B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What beautiful words of advice! But with respect to your situation, don't allow yourself to accept defeat. All of us in this world make mistakes and you have to know how to confront them. One day, you will get out of this place and you will be able to get out of that lake, the one that prevents you from reaching the shores of sturdy ground. Continue fighting and thank you for your words.

Knowing I'd Hit My Lowest

The day I flaked on an old friend and didn't give a damn, I knew I'd hit rock bottom.

The first time I jacked my own blood, I knew I'd hit rock bottom. The second I stuck that needle in my arm, I knew I'd hit rock bottom.

The moment I watched my mama cry then walked out the door, I knew I'd hit rock bottom .

-Jay, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: This list of horrors are indeed signs of very low points in your life. But the fact that you can recognize what these terrible moments mean tells us that you are already moving in the only direction you can move when you've hit the bottom, and that's up!

Preparing Today For Tomorrow

What CITO fears is gettin' wrapped off some dumb stuff that I could avoid, 'cause if I get out and come back for some dumb stuff, I'm going to be mad. I know bad from good, wrong from right, so I'ma feel like I wasn't prepared or I wasn't preparing myself now. Since I don't want that, then I'ma start preparing today with goals and things I could do to burn time in a positive way, so I don't have to come back. This was just a time, my time to review my past so I can get ready for my future. CITO out.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Getting out and free is no guarantee that all will be smooth sailing, so we admire you for figuring out that now is the time to think about the future, and to give yourself those positive goals to achieve. What are some of those goals for you, CITO?

Estas Preso De Nuevo

¿Tú crees que esto es un juego?
Pero tu madre llora y sufre
Sentando aqui adentro
Pienso en como escapar
Porque en un juicio perdi mi libertad
Estoy pensando cuando tu madre te viene a visitar
El dolor en su alma, ella trata de soportar
Para que tú no lo veas llorar, pero al llegar as su casa
Tu la tienes que oir gritar
Se tira al piso a desahogar el dolor
Como llora, le pido a Cristo Jesus que le de fuerza y valor.

From The Beat: Que linda expresión Jose! Sinceramente tú sientes lo que mucha madres pasan cuando sus hijos andan en malos caminos. ¿Pasa tu madre por todo esto por culpa de tus errores? ¿Has hecho algo para remediar ese dolor que ella pasa por ti?

You're Locked Up Again

You think this is a game?
But your mother cries and suffers
Sitting inside of here
I think about how to escape
Because in a trial I lost my freedom
I'm thinking about when your mother comes to visit you
The pain in her soul, she tries to restrain
So you won't see her cry,
But when she gets home
You have to hear her yell
She throws herself onto the floor
To alleviate herself of the pain
Oh, how she cries
I ask Jesus Christ
To give her strength and courage.

-José B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a wonderful expression, Jose! Honestly, your piece captures what so many mothers go through when their children are on bad roads. Does your mother go through all this because of your mistakes? Have you done something to cure the pain that she goes through because of you?

No Creo Vivir 50 Años

No creo vivir cincuenta años, pero me gustaría que mi capsula la abriera mi jefita o mi morro porque es lo más importante que tengo.

Lo que me sorprendiera de los 50 años es que me preguntaría yo mismo "viví 50 años, no lo puedo creer." Me pregunto esto por la vida que llebo. Siento que no llegaría porque me matarían mis enemigos o me matarían accidentalmente por andar robando carros, o me pasaría cualquier cosa. Orale morrito les escribo al rato.

La verdad me he preguntado que sera de mí más adelante porque mi vida solo ha sido estar preso por andar robando carros, esterios y andar vendiendo drogas. O sea, mi vida ha sido undesmadre.

From The Beat: Aveces es muy malo decir las cosas que uno dice. Si en verdad consideras que no viviras todo ese tiempo, entonces eso es lo que va a pasarte. Lastimosamente no te importa perder tu vida por algo que no vale la pena. ¿Apoco no te gustaría llegar a cargar en tus brazos a tus ñietos? ¿Que te digan, "abuelo cuentanos otra historia"? ¿No te gustaría ver crecer a las creaturas que fueron formados de tu propia sagre, de tu propio ser? Hay muchas cosas bonita en la vida que te falta describir. No tienes ni idea de estas maravillas. Por eso te aconsejamos que intentes conocer estas maravillas y despues decidas que hacer con tu vida.

I Don't Believe I'm Going To Live Another 50 Years

I don't believe I'm going to live another 50 years, but I would like my mother or my lil' bro would be the ones to open up my time capsule because it's the most important thing I have.

What would surprise me if I were to be around in 50 years is that I would ask myself, "I've lived 50 years more. I can't believe it." I would ask myself this because of the life I lead. I don't think that I would live to see 50 more years because my enemies would kill me or they would kill me accidentally for going around and stealing cars, or something would happen to me. All right lil' bros, I'll talk to y'all later.

The truth is, I have asked myself what will become of me later on in life because my life has just been being locked up for going around and stealing cars, stereos, and selling drugs. In other words, my life has been a disaster.

-Lil' Crusito B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sometimes it is very bad to say the kind of things that people say. If you honestly think that you will not live for this period of time, then that is what is going to happen to you. Unfortunately, you don't care if you lose your life over something that is not worth losing your life over. We guess then that you wouldn't like to one day hold your grandchildren in your arms? Or that they ask you, "Grandpa, tell us a story?" You wouldn't like to see the creatures that were formed from your own blood, from your own being? There are a lot of nice things in life that you're forgetting to describe. You don't even have a clue about these marvelous things. That's why we advise you to make an attempt to get to know these marvelous things and then decide what to do with your life.

Life Itself

L - is for the love I give and get back
I - is for improving my attitude
F - is for the freedom I want to have in life
E - is for the excitement that I have in my heart for the unborn baby I'm goin' to give life
I - is for in love with a 16 year old boy
T - is for the torture I put my mom through
S - is for solving the problem with my baby daddy
E - is for enough drama with life
L - is for losing the friend I thought I had
F - is for the forgivingness I ask God

-Jeannie-M GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This tells us a lot about yourself and your life. What are you going to do once you have your baby? After all the "torture" you've put your mama through, is she going to be able to help you? What are you planning to do as a parent, that you missed growing up as a child?

RIP AJ, 1981-2004

The day my brother died my whole life slowed down
I was thinking for a while, then a tear rolled down
I can't believe my brother died in his sleep, not AJ,
One of the realist brothers alive. No, not this way.
He gave me a lot game, paid my way in the streets
Thuggin' his whole life. Now he resting in peace.
Either he was grinding hard or putting up on more game
So many thing's had to trade
But he had to get paid.
But he gone, damn, thuggin' up in the sky
Kiss Tay on the face and tell Slim I said hi.
Hold back tears from my eyes as I write the truth
Don't like writing about AJ but I write the truth
And ain't nobody like you
So I'm gonna ride it out
Rest In Peace

-Lil' AJ B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are so sorry for all the losses of all the boys who have paid the price you write about. You write that "he had to get paid," and we look around and see how many people like AJ (and Slim and Tay) got paid this same way. We'd like you to imagine a conversation there in heaven between God and your three fallen brothers, and tell us what you think might be said by all. Then we'd like to know whether you plan to do anything that's different when you get out of here so that you don't join their sad circle.

La Vida Vale Mucho Para Mí

Para mí la vida es algo que vale mucho. Cuando tú sabes disfrutar la vida se te hace muy feliz. Cuando uno nomas se la tira de callejero uno dice que la vida no es bonita, pero no es verdad porque si tú sabes gozar la vida tú la sientes que es muy bonita.

Si pasas en la calle con las malditas drogas o estas en la cárcel sabes que la vida no la siente bonita. Nomas estas perdiendo tu tiempo en la cárcel. Por eso, para mí, la vida es algo que vale mucho. Hay que cuidarla y hay que vivirla con todos tus seres queridos. Si no quieres sufrir, trata de vivir la vida y si quieres ser feliz portate bien con todos tus seres queridos que son tu familia.

From The Beat: Sinceramente cuando escuchamos pedazos como estos, nos dan ganas de ir a nuestros hogares y darles un gran abrazo a todos los miembros de nuestras familia. Estas en lo cierto Elvin, la vida es algo maravilloso. Es hermosa cuando la sabes vivir, cuando la sabes difrutarla positivamente. ¿Y tú como piensas vivir el resto de vida que tienes? ¿Será felizmente o tristemente? ¿Cómo? Recuerda que no siempre vas a vivir el mismo tipo de vida que llebas.

Life Means A Lot To Me

For me, life is something that means a lot. When you know how to enjoy life, your life becomes very happy. When one just throws their life to the streets, one says that life is not nice, but that's not true because if you know how to enjoy life, you feel like life is nice.

If you spend your time out on the streets with those wicked drugs or you're in jail, you know, life doesn't feel so nice. You're just wasting your time in jail. That's why, for me, life is something that means a lot. You have to take care of it and you have to live it with all your loved ones. If you don't want to suffer, try to live life, and if you want to be happy, behave yourself with your loves ones, which is your family.

-Elvin B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Honestly, when we read pieces like this one, we get the urge to go to our homes and give a great big hug to all the members of our family. You're right, Elvin. Life is something marvelous. Life is beautiful when you know how to live it and when you know how enjoy it positively. And you? How do you intend on living the rest of your life? Will it be happily or sad? How? Remember that you're not always going to live the same kind of life you lead right now.

Fear Of The Unknown

What's good with The Beat? You already know dis ya boy Reese-C-Cup coming out of B5 maximum. I'm really not going to talk about my childhood fears, but some of my teenage fears.

Like right now, I really ain't trying to go to Glen Mills 'cause it's hella far and ain't gone be able to see my family for nine months. It's just gone be hella new to me and shhh. But then again, I'm like, man, I gotta do it just so I can start over and get a chance to really succeed.

But I'm gone go just on the strength that I'm 17 and I can get a diploma, GED and learn some trades, play football, hoops, run track so that's gone be platinum.

But I'm about to quit loafin' in da city, and be at Mills. Holla back.

-Reese-C-Cup B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's always a little scary to leave what is familiar for what is unfamiliar. But you are going with such an open and upbeat attitude, we think you'll do fine at the Mills. There is much for you to learn (and much for you to teach). Nine months? The length of a pregnancy. You will come back a new man, better prepared to live the way you know you'd like to, without having to spend more months in places like this, or worse. Of course you will miss your family, but that only means you will appreciate them all the more when you are reunited. Good luck. We will certainly miss you in our workshops, so why not write us from Glen Mills and paint us a word picture.

Stop Running

This is young Enano I'm back again. I blew another chance that they gave me. I only got one or two chances left. I keep on running from placement, but I got to because once there ain't no more chances left, they're going to send me to some places worse and where I can't run no more.

I'm getting tired of trying to stay on the run an' keep getting caught because I'm doing the same shhh over and over. It gets harder on you. So anybody thinking of running from any out-of-home placement, expect to come back. So go knock this time out, and get out and forget the system.

-Enano B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know, Enano, the message to stop running from placements speaks to a larger problem that we all have of trying to run from our problems (literally, by running, or figuratively by taking drugs or doing other things that take our mind off what's really going on). Yes, it is hard to stay and face the music, but in the long run, it is the only way we can put our problems behind us and start moving forward with our lives. We hope you are able to follow your own good advice so that you never again have to write, "I'm back again..."

I Feared Going To Jail

Something I feared when I was younger was going to jail, because people told me how life was behind those walls. I was stupid for thinking negative when I should have been thinking positive. I always thought before I acted, that's how I stayed out of trouble. Now I am here an' I am trying to fight. The point I'm trying to make is to think positive.

-Stephen B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There's a difference between making a stupid mistake and being stupid. All we need to do is read this piece to see that you are far from stupid! Knowledge is power, Stephen, so use the power of your knowledge to go back to that fear of going to jail, and keep yourself out!

Lo Que Pondrías

En primer lugar pondría mi fotografía. Pondría un diario con todo lo que logre escribir. Pondría una camisa, un pantalon, un par de tennis de los mejores, unos boxers y calcetines, y si estubiera vivo en 50 años diría gracias a Dios por estar vivo.

Me gustaría que la capsula la abriera un ñieto o una ñieta. Les diría que yo lo usaba hace 50 años. Tambien les pondría unos CD de reggaeton, de romanticas, unas baladas en Español, una pelicula de los vatos locos, una pelicula de Ice Cube, y una de 50 Cents. Y por ultimo pondría una Biblia. Que Dios nos perdone, Amen.

From The Beat: ¿Por qué mejor no pones toda la casa entera amigo? Nos parece buena idea que pongas esas cosas ahí, así de esa manera podria explicarles a tus futuros ñietos como fueron estos tiempos. ¿Y que le dirias sobre como mantenerse fuera de problemas? ¿Pondrias algo con el cual les pudieras explicar las cosas que ahorita estas pasando?

What I Would Put In My Time Capsule

To begin, I would put a picture of myself in my time capsule. I would put a diary in it containing everything that I was able to write in it. I would put in a shirt, a pair of pants, a pair of the best tennis shoes out there, some boxers, and socks, and if I were alive in 50 years, I would give thanks to God for being alive.

I would like for one of my grandsons or granddaughters to open the capsule. I would tell them that I used those things almost 50 years ago. I would also put in the time capsule some reggaeton CD's, romance CD's, some ballads in Spanish, a movie about crazy dudes, an Ice Cube movie, and a 50 Cent movie. And for last, I would put a Bible in it. May God forgive us, Amen.

-Tarita B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why not just put the whole house in your time capsule, friend? It sounds to us like a good idea to put all these things in because by doing so, you'll be able to explain to your future grandchildren how things were during those times. And what would you say to them regarding staying out of problems? Would you be able to place something in your time capsule that would be able to explain to them the kinds of things that you are going through right now?

Feelin' Myself

Today CITO is feeling it. I'm feeling the determination inside me to do good and succeed in life because I know I can do it. Doing this crime stuff is just to waste the time I have in life to relax and be me. So I know I control my life now with my brain instead of my drug.

-Cito B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We also know that you can do it, CITO. Just don't let the temptations you'll face cause you to forget that as long as you let your brain direct you, your own your way to a better life. Once you forget and think you can control just a little of that drug use, you're back on a downward spiral. But we believe you're too smart for that.

Do Overs

One time I wish I could've did somethin' over is when I got locked up. Instead of doin' the stuff I did, I could have been at home, lookin' after my lil' bra. Or I could have been helpen my Grams at home or somethin', instead of bein' doin' what I was doin'. I think I made a bad choice. That is a time when I could've did somethin' over, 'cause I don't want my brother to grow up and do the same shhh that I was, out in the streets.

I am not goin' to get out and start doin' the same shhh. I am go' get out and go to school and try not to come back to this shhh hole. I don't want my brother to come to this messed up place.

-Daddy-O B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We applaud you for wanting to change and for making a commitment to change. Just keep thinking of your little brother because he looks up to you in a way that almost assures you that he will follow your lead — not in what you tell him, but in what he sees you doing. When you're tempted to go back to the old ways, remember just how much responsibility rests on your shoulders.

Childhood Do Over

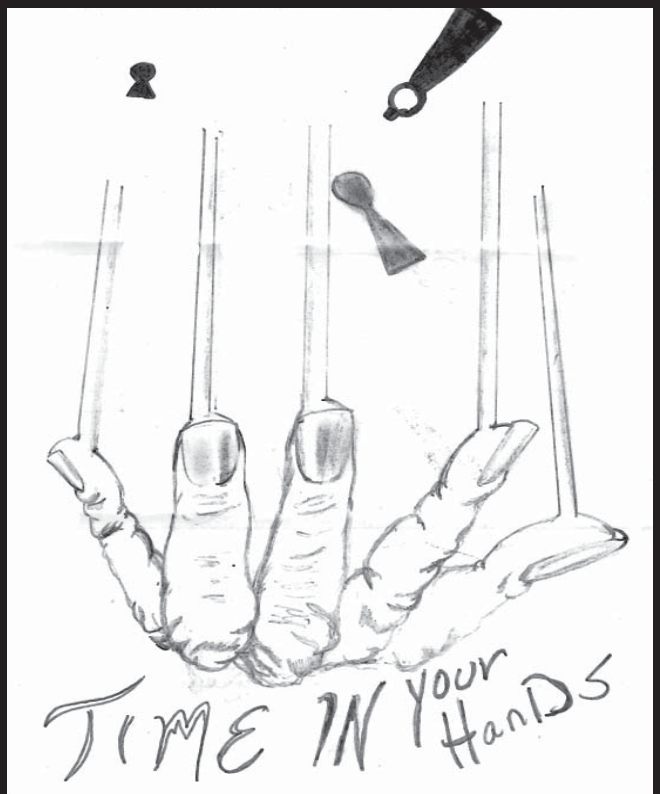
I would want to do my childhood because if my dad was there for me and I had a positive role model that I can look up to and show me the right way to go...

The way I'm going right now is not the way. I wish I had somebody to tell me to go to school because that counts. If you don't go, it will catch up to you and you will be behind and want to drop out like I did. But I am go try to go back to school to get my diploma because that's what you need to get a descent job nowadays.

If I had somebody to keep me off the streets and selling drugs I wouldn't be the way I am right now. So to all the people that still have a chance to change their lives, I suggest you do that before it's to late.

-Dre Doojah B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We wish you hadn't grown up without a father, but we can see that you do have someone telling you to go to school and someone telling you to stop selling drugs in the street. It's you, Dre Doojah. You are father to the boy. All you have to do is listen to your own voice and focus on what you're telling yourself. It won't be easy, but then, this life you're living hasn't been easy, either. So keep your eyes on the prize, which is your own future. Good luck.



Take Back That Day

I would take back the day I put my trust in the wrong person. Because that day I got hit for $11,500 and could of lost my life. That money ain't shhh compared to my life!

That day I seen that ninjas that be in your face every day saying they love you and got your back is all full of shhh. Now I only got my family to look out for me. Some family will play you, but I know my pops will never play me.

-Qbb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're glad you can't take this day back, QBB, because it taught you some very hard lessons, and not just about those who claim to be homies until the chips are down. The most important lesson you learned (and now can teach to others coming up) is that money comes and goes. We lose it, we make it, and sometimes we lose it again. But life... ah, life is so precious a gift that there is only one of a kind like you in the entire universe, and there will never be another. What could be more important than that?

The Things We'll Never Get

What I wish I could've done over is hanging out with the wrong people. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be the crime committing self I am today. I'm locked up. I hate it. I always regret making that choice of getting in those bushes and start shooting. If I had different friends back in the day, shooting at cars wouldn't be something for fun and be something I'd never do.

Doing time does things to people. If it's not that small cell you have, it's staring outside, wishing you were there. I'd do all of that over. I'd take back all the stupid things I did if I could just so I'd be living a straight life, not committing crimes and no jail time. No one wants to grow up in Juvenile hall. No one.

-Peter B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's true that friends can be a big influence on your, but in the end, it's really up to you to follow your own instincts and code of conduct, and not others. That's the difference between those who lead and those who follow (and maybe it's the difference between those who remain children and those you grow into adulthood). You're also right that no one wants to be here, and so we hope that this nasty experience is enough to make you do over the future, since nothing any of us can do will change the past. Sometimes, the hardest (and most courageous) thing we can do is to say, "No" to so-called friends who having nothing to offer but trouble and pain.

My Life Ain't Coo'

I wish I could get a do over at life because I would choose a different life. Because the life I chose is not the one I want to live. The one I'm livin' ain't coo' at all, gettin' shot at, sellin' dope, do hella stuff that ain't supposed to do.

I wish I could get another chance at life so I could go back to school and do the education thing. I would be a square and wouldn't care what people thought about. That's the reason most people in the halls, 'cause they wanna prove somethin' to the next man. Being follower will get yo' head bust for real.

So when I got outta here, I'ma do my few months at the Walden House and get back into football so I can move the fam outta the city.

-Cal B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Cal, if you want to change the way you live your life, you can still do it. You don't need another life. You can stop doing what you were doing that got you caught up in the first place, and start living the way you want to live. Football could be your ticket to a new life, but finishing your

Do Over: June 23, 2006

What I wish I could do over again, is what happened on the day of twenty-third of June, 2006.

What happened was: I was on a thizz and had smoked an eighth of weed; and my patnas was trying to check some rivals. It was two Mexican guys, and we was talking trash. My friend, who was drunk, hit one of the guys, and that's when I took off on the dude. I dipped him on his back and kicked him in his face. Then I started running! My patna went back to his house and changed clothes, 'cause we had hella blood on us.

What I wish I could do over is — everything! — I wish I had never done any drugs that day, 'cause everything else that happened that day would not have happened. When I'm not under the influence, I'm less aggressive; I can control my anger; and I would not have done something so out of pocket!

-Repentant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You do see that it's not just that day, but every day that you need to stay away from drugs. Ecstasy is supposed to be a feel-good drug, but it can definitely take away your good judgment, likewise with weed or alcohol or whatever. Plus combining drugs just messes with you more. Even if the next man can smoke and stay chill, you know now that you need to keep a clear head. But, you know, on top of the drugs is an even more dangerous influence — the whole notion of rival armies of soldiers. Don't surrender to that tyranny or you'll continue to lose your freedom and maybe your life.

Poem

Times are hard and the streets are rough,
This is why I'm focused to act so tough,
My skin is brown, though I lived that down,
This is how I was caught in a circle of frowns.
My legs stand tall but my arms reach short
This is how I missed the grasp of support.
My mind is strong and my intentions never wrong
But I always seem to sing the same sad song.
One thing I've realized is life isn't long
So from here on I'll do no wrong.
I'll stand tall with my head held high
My frown will rise, my eyes will shine.
Because now I see that the prize is life.
And I intend to reach my palace in the sky.
So on my journey to a better place,
I'll keep all the memories of yesterday.
Now born again with much left to defeat,
Only this time around my mind will compete
And no more storms will knock me to my knees
Because this time around I have surfaced my feet.
I'll blow a breeze with a breath of ease
To live my life with unending peace.

-G-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep the lines flowing, because your poetry is medicine to Beat readers. Healing, inspiration. Share with The Beat every step on your journey from frown to smile, storms to peace.

This Block

i don't exist in this world
the world of pain, torture, lust and hate
i get lost in the crowd of people
all kinds of people
dope fiends, dope dealers, drugs, drugs, drugs, and even killers
i don't exist on this block
the m o — it's all about money
lil' trav my name, i'm in the game
i fight to survive, to eat, to be
crack, heroin, purple, ecstasy, whatcha need, i got it
i don't exist in this place, i have no face
just a voice you hear, crying out silent tears
moving through the crowd of death fighting a war that never ends
alleys that never sleep, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week
i don't exist in this life, no one cares — why
because in this world is death
no one can exist in this, comprehend this
you just walk as if you know
you talk as is if you know
don't cry, they'll eat you alive
no peace on the streets — why
no one cares if no one exists in this place
this block
just a war against yourself
trying to find "peace on the streets" of west oakland
no one can exist

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you, Travis, for this excellent piece of writing that speaks of so many blocks, not just the one you grew up on in West Oakland. And if "to exist" means to be yourself, to realize yourself in the world, then, no, the person you were born to be has yet to come into existence, lost in reaction to and interaction with this crazy place you were born into along with all your brothers, each of whom, one by one, got done by the same annihilating environment. On the other hand, we look into your eyes and we see you there (hurt, laughing, angry, awash with emotion) looking back. For you do exist and make your mark on this page. Thank you for being willing to engage with us. It takes trust. Like they say, "It's a must!"

Mom, Death, God and Me

What it do, Beat boys? It's Lil' Spanky, coming at you from 150 max with some solid talk. Well, you guys askin' me what my fear is.

One thing fo' sho' is that my number one fear, since I was a youngsta, is losing my mom — my mom is the most precious thing in my life! Other than that, I have no fear in my life but God. God is the One who could scare the hell out of you and also could kill you.

So I guess I'd have to say that my worse fear is death. I fear death for the simple fact that there is no coming back from it. And the second thing I fear, is me — because I am the one who can scare myself or harm myself the most. Well, till then, I'll be gone out this hole. Society is going to fear me once I get back in the streets.

-Lil' Spanky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you say that society is going to fear you, you might as well say that your mom is going to fear for you. She will fear for what you do and what it will do to you and others. What's the point of saying you fear yourself, and then go out with a threat like that? You're disrespecting yourself, your mother, God and The Beat with those words.

Chupacabras

Growing up as a kid, I wasn't like the normal kids. My race is different. Most kids, they would be scared of dogs, spiders, the boogey-man, etc. But not me.

There were two things I was scared of the most. One was the "chupacabras" — it was this little creature that my people said would drink the blood out of animals. I was always scared it would drink my blood and kill me.

Another thing I feared even more than that, was "la llorana". She was a lady that supposedly drowned her kids. Then she was so distressed that she came looking for her kids everywhere, yelling, "Mis hijos". When she got some kids, she would drown them too! I always thought she would come and look for me. Those were the things I was scared of as a kid.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those two stories would take on mythical proportions in the imagination of a child. In both, a child's helplessness is exposed, and all your other fears feed in.

Fearing Myself

I have a lot of issues, with no room to store
Afraid to face my problems, 'cause pain is heavenly adored
For I don't know why and I feel this way
But soon there will be a debt to pay.
Only God can judge me, so what others say, mean no good
I know I'm a ghetto child tryin' to escape the 'hood to leave
But I would have to leave what I much care about
But life is more important so I plan my route
I face situations that no one knows
Not sistah or a brotha should weigh my stones
I face death, day and night, so I just pray before I sleep at night
And when awake, and come to, I look up above... and I'm thanking you
I fear 'cause it's a part of life, but I never have looked back or thought twice
I'm fearful of love, and life itself,
fearful of me 'cause at times I can't control myself
But when I snap back and come to
I look up above... and I'm thanking you

-D B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In a way, you're proving with this piece that God is not the only one who can judge you... you are also judging yourself. Does your fear ever make you think about changing the life you lead, doing things that don't put you in fear of losing the one thing that can never be repeated? Do you want to? Do you even know how to?

From A Boy To A Man

Man I'm about to be up out of here for real. I want to thank The Beat for coming and putting all this information in my heart. Y'all made me become from a boy to a man. The reason I say that is because I been readin' all of everybody's pieces. I even read The Beat Without. Even though I only got about four pieces in and I been writing for months. But I still appreciate getting those.

I know at times you guys be busy, typing everybody's writing. This might be my last time writing, or maybe one more time. I get out July 31st and I pray that I never come back. My girl been sending me pictures of her and I be having memories on momas.

I want to thank all the hall staff – Ms. Brock, Baker, Moe, Ms. Wingate. Will, Ms. Woods, Coach Hackel, Edd, Johnos, Bradley, everybody. And thanks very much.

-Lb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't worry, remember that it takes a while for the pieces to print. We hope that when you get out you keep reading us, and also keep writing for us! We want to hear what it's like being a new man, and it might just inspire some Beat Readers, the same way you were inspired!

Rock Bottom Is Right Now

Rock bottom is where I am right now. There ain't nothing that could happen that can make it worse than it already is. I lost my family, my friends, my 10 month old son, and my freedom.

My name is Anthony. I grew up in Hayward. My whole life I've been into gangs, drugs, and money. But it's not about that no more. I have to change my life in order to live it. All this bullshhh ain't worth it. All I want to do is my time, and get out and be with my son, and my family.

One of my closest homeboys got killed a couple months back. And I thought that that was rock bottom, but it wasn't. I realized he is in a better place. RIP Arturo P., you'll always be missed.

Well all I want to say is: I want to change my life. And do what I have to do. This is Lil' Ant from Hayward. To all keep yo' head up, and get through yo' programs. I'm out.

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From the Beat: What you wrote leaves us wanting more! Why has your whole life been about gangs so far? What started that, and what kept it going? Why is now the moment to change, and how hard is it going to be? We look forward to reading every chapter of your life story.

The Why Poem

In this world of hate, there is no trust
So keeping protection with you is a must
Ninjas is scandalous, so watch your back
Because respect for one another is what they lack
They value no one's lives, not even theirs
They scream for help but no one cares
Life's a struggle, and these streets are hell
Learning what we are taught, we are destined to fail
Our generation is lost, and can't find our way
Education is the ticket, but they make us pay
And since life is expensive, we hustle on the block
They left us with no choice, but expect us to stop
Murders and rapings in every town
Bodies buried in every ground
And as children weep, and babies cry
I sit in my room and wonder – "Why"

-Lil' Jb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poetry continues to get better and deeper! We appreciate you breaking it down for us in rhymes, just what's wrong with these times. What can one young man like you do to put respect back into the streets? Plenty! Don't believe there isn't anything you can't do. The world is yours, now how do you want you and your future children to live it?

This Trouble

What is trouble? Is trouble peeing in the bed when you were little. Is trouble sneaking out of the house past curfew. Is trouble getting caught coming home high or drunk. No. Trouble is when you are facing 3-5 years in YA just like me.

- Feeling The Trouble, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's amazing how quickly we go from having children's problems to adult problems. As you struggle with this in the realest way, here and now, where do you turn for solace and support? Tell us how you are keeping the peace inside yourself.

Fear Free?

Well I'm scared of needles, dogs, spiders, roaches, ants, mosquitos, ducks, darkness, drugs ghost, elephants, tarantula, scary movies (but fun), earthquakes, volcanoes, floods bombs, to die.

If I could or would over come these things, I would be fear free. Why? Because I really don't know why I do because I don't like neither one of these things. I never liked spiders because they scare me. I think they will come and get me. Crawl on me. I might go crazy or something. I hope I could overcome all things except for volcanoes floods, bombs.

-Angelina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you plan to overcome you fears? Sometimes you just have to face them – but don't do drugs! Keep that fear (With drugs you'll have so many more problems). Sometimes we have these fears for a reason – to keep us out of trouble. Now go explore. Make friends with a dog and an elephant. Good luck and be safe.

Can't Stop Thinking About My Daughter

When I get out, my daughter will be one year old and I'm-a miss her first birthday.

I'm really mad about that, 'cause when I was out I really didn't spend that much time with my daughter. I was always with my friend doing a lot of bad things, 'cause I always wanted to have fun and didn't have time for her. But when I get out I will spend all my time with her, 'cause I love her so bad and I miss her so bad. I can't think straight in here.

When I get out of here, I will do the right thing to be a father.

-Young Papa Blues, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Since you didn't sign the piece, we named your piece. It's too easy for us t osimply say shame on you for neglecting your child, instead we will say, It sounds like you are finally thinking straight. Remember how you feel right now, when you are on the outs. We know it's easy to get distracted, but now that you can see your priorities in their proper order, don't lose sight of them once you're out. Always, always put your child first!

Do Over 2003

If I could choose one day to do over I would go back in 2003.

It was a cold night and my mom went out to lord knows where, she came back in a hurry. She wouldn't sleep, eat and she couldn't think. Scared of what would happen next, she carried a knife. Someone got knifed the night my mom left. She went to jail for murder. She is still in jail. 2014 is a long time from now. That would be the day that I would do over.

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, Makayla, that's a hard thing to deal with. But, really there's nothing you could have done to prevent that from happening. You had no idea. Just be patient and try to get you life back on track, so that when your mom gets out, you can make her proud and be the support she will need. Are you two in touch via letters?

Poem

Too dumb for school and too lazy for work
Rather chill in the 'hood, posted at the corner store of on my turf,
Where money comes easy, in a matter of minutes
Just hand 'em a sac, take the cheddar and your finished,
Never through I'd end up like this, always though I'd be more like my mother
Now I find myself feeling so worthless. I'm willing to die for a color
Smoking more and more dope to avoid all the pain
Seeing how my life is, it makes me ashamed
Why can't I be like my lil' brother, who's at the top of his class
I'm tired of sellin' this poison to my own kind just for cash
I can say I wanna stop but talk is cheap
To be honest I'm not sure I'm ready to put my addiction to sleep.
My addiction to crack and my love for money
My needles and heron, the homegirls. my honey.
I'm sacred to get sober, afraid to be alone.
Nobody will ever call me,
No point in even havin' a phone,
I can't do this alone without anyone by my side
So please God help me or give me a sign.

-Smiley, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: How many more signs can God give you before you see? You're willing to die for a color (a COLOR!), but it doesn't appear that you're willing to live according to God's plan. You can't have it both ways, Smiley. Of course you're scared. Of course you want to hold on to what is familiar and easy. But open your eyes enough to see that this isn't easy, that that notion that "money comes easy" is just childish foolishness. This is the consequence of that easy money, and this isn't easy! We think you're not only struggling with your desire to escape through drugs (and return to the familiar), but you're also struggling to be an adult. The child in you is afraid of what it means to grow up, to face your own adult responsibilities, to give up friends who aren't really friends, to recognize that your choices affect many people beyond yourself. But the adult that is already stirring inside you recognizes what it will mean to leave that child behind (still a part of you, but no longer in control of you), and that is a battle the adult must win if the child is to survive!

To be honest I'm not sure I'm ready to put my addiction to sleep.

My Fears

Man, my fears is never being able to see daylight again, ya feel me.
Man I can't even handle being in jail for this little time that I'm in here bud.
If I had to do adult time like some of my family members,
I would probably go stir crazy, I'll be in my cell go 18 on citas.
Also I fear death. A lot of ninjas try to front and say that they don't care about dying.
But I do. I don't want to die.
If I could I would stay alive forever.
I wish Cridy Bo could've stayed alive forever.
I know he feared death too and didn't want to die.
But anyway, those are my fears.
All right then I'm out. RIP Cridy Bo

-Lil' Jb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you for being honest about a fear we ALL share, but few on the streets have the courage to admit.

Two Weeks

Just in two weeks my life flashed before my eyes. Which tells me

I gotta step up and dust them other guys. When you think about it, ain't nothing promised to you, not even the blue skies. And then, when youngstas come to jail, they wanna give the 'word to the wise', they talk all that stuff, saying they ain't coming back, then they get on the streets and they still wanna talk thei' lil' smack.

"You say you in a gang? Name one ninja that got your back!" All they do is wear your RIP hoody when you get smoked.

See, life is not a game. Youngsta, take this seriously, but that's just the way it is out here in these cold streets. And when you die, you'll find out it ain't all about the Bay, 'cause that's why I gotta say RIP to my bras, Jay, and Maniac Du-bee.

-Young Stinna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Young Stinna, you gotta step up and think about what you are saying. Your words are powerful! Tell us, if it ain't all about the Bay, then what is it all about? What is your life about? You are right, it's messed up in the streets, but can you stay away? The truth is, you match the description of the ones you are talking about, which is why you know them so well. Make a life change. You see it from this perspective, can you see it from another one? Try the schoolhouse. Try listening to those who really care about you!

Life Is Short

Sometimes life is short
for some people who are in the wrong place at the wrong time,
so they are in danger.
Maybe they are in danger themselves,
about what they have done to someone one day.
When you in the streets
someone might just start shooting and bullets don't have names
on them and if some do, my name is not going to be on one.
Like people that go to juvenile hall,
they say that they ain't coming back,
but two days after they get out, they be right back in.
Life is not a game,
but to spoiled children it is, 'cause they just get it how they is.
They killed my patna Jay 'cause he was in the wrong place
when they shot up the street for someone else,
Jay was in the way.

-Justin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Justin life is short, which is exactly why it is so precious. Be careful with the life decisions that you make, 'cause one bad choice could cut your life shorter. Be careful.

The Worst Thing

as a child, the thing that i feared the most
was that my mother would get time in prison
it happened like when i was ten years old
it was around new year's
she had went down with my uncle
for some pee's of some powder
the day that happened
was one of the worst days that i have ever had
eventually my uncle took the rap
and my mother was out
that was the worst thing that has ever happened to me

-Karlitos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It brings tears to our eyes, just imagining your fears and feelings as a ten year old going through that day. Thanks for sharing such a powerful memory with our readers.

Wondering

What's up Beat? Just chilling and doing my time. Boring, as usual. But on the other hand – doing all right because I know that I am going to get out of this crap.

This life is the only thing I know about and I wonder if when I get out it's going to be different than when I used to be outside. Like, am I still going to smoke weed, or tweak? I don't want that stupid life. I don't want to steal to get meth or marijuana. In fact I don't want to smoke nothing no more.

As soon as I get out I am going to go to Narcotics Anonymous and start fresh, clean, and be different, and get looked at differently most of all. That's about it.

-Francisco, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You're asking the right questions and you're answering them right, too. Our best wishes are with you. If you work hard at it, we know you'll succeed.

Two Poems by Oscar

Like A Creature
I break like glass
hit by lightning.
Watch this tiger dance
and sing a tune
like a creature
at midnight.

Mistakes And Snakes
Voices in my head
from dusk to dawn.
Mistakes in my life.
Snakes in my head.
Secrets in my brain.
Homies get kicked
to the curb and put aside.
No lie.
I put God away.
I'm doing tiempo
behind these walls.
I need to open my eyes.

-Oscar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yes you do need to open your eyes, but you're doing a pretty good job with that pencil of yours. Keep it up. And be careful of what you put away, and what you don't.

When My Mom Don't Come See Me

Let me tell you how I feel when my mom don't come see me.
I feel weak in the bones, like it is not me.
Let me tell you, when my mom don't come see me
I feel like I am beefing with the world. And it's just only me.
And why this got to be me sitting up in YGC?
This cannot be right, I feel like everything going wrong,
when I can be at home.
Now I am going back to my cell waiting for my mother's mail.
When my momma don't come see me
because I was running around, screwing around on the streets.
That's why she just letting me be.
But it's good mom if you looking come see me.

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: Do you think your mom, who clearly loves you, is trying to tell you something about mutual respect? You didn't think about her when you were running the streets, but now you miss her when she's not there. Is she trying to remind you that love is a two-way street, and that sometimes it requires sacrifices? Are you learning that to get the attention you want now, you have to give the attention she'll want later?

Two Poems By Jordan

Secret
I flipped the coin.
God popped out of the dust.
I made a mistake.
Snake voices
coming from a stranger,
a secret.

A Tune
I was sitting on the couch.
At midnight there was lightning.
Flying tigers jumped out of my pocket
and through the window
to fight a creature.
Instead, they sang a tune.
Is this a lie?

-Jordan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Cool poems Jordan. We've sent them to the poet whose words inspired your poems.

The Lost

I see a life fallen to depths of space of darkness
that captures all in a setting that kills the soul,
but leaves a senselessness
of muscle, bone, flesh, brain and a heart
that keeps a life afloat.
I lost.

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your writing, so luminous and controlled, makes all the groveling worthwhile. You're a straight POW/COPOW natural, but we'll wait to get something more developed before we put it together. The life may make you lost the words can keep you found. Peace.

As soon as I get out I am going to go to Narcotics Anonymous and start fresh, clean, and be different, and get looked at differently most of all.

My Thoughts

It's all your fault you know
The reason I can't let you go
I've hardly accomplished anything today
'Cause of you what can I say
Every time I begin something
You creep into my thoughts
Softly slowly at first
And before I know it my imagination is filled
With thoughts of you that make me want to burst
Warm thoughts, nice thoughts, such loving thoughts
'bout all that special love you brought
but this is getting out of hand
girl best believe I'm not playin'
I have to get something done today
With you fulfillin' my thoughts
There's not more to say
So maybe I'll begin by doin' something
Very important
Very real
By tellin' you "I love you still"

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, writing a poem like this is the easy part. Especially for someone like you, who writes so well and so often. The hard part will be LIVING the poem. What would that look like, living up to this poem.

Some Do Overs

Something I would like to do over is, I should of gone to court and I wouldn't be locked up.

Another day I really would like to do over is when my ex got shot and killed in a gang related shooting, I would tell him not to be there because I really loved him, so I got his name with with an "in living memory" tattooed on my back. I really miss him. I wish he would still be alive and bring him back, but I can't all I can say is Rest in Peace.

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Vanessa, we are sorry to hear about you loss. One life affects so many. When will this senseless violence end? Plus, next time yo uahve a commitment do not miss it! Get yourself to your appointments on time.

Fear Of The Dark

What I used to be scared of was being in the dark. How I overcome this fear was, I grew up. Something I fear now is, I'm just walking down the street and getting shot and killed doing with gang related.

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

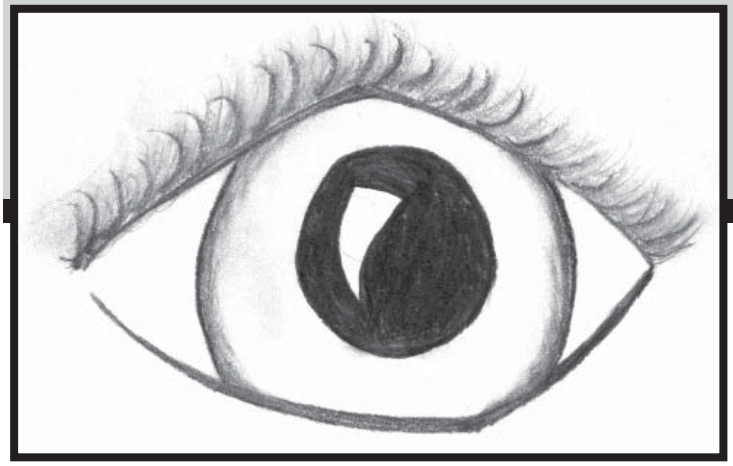
From The Beat: It's a shame, but many of your peers have this fear as well. Is there a way to protect your self from this happening? Do you put yourself in harm's way?

Lost and Won

too many times have i tried to erase the past
i sometimes pray that this pain and sorrow would go away fast
they say i have to suck it up and live with it
but it seems unbearable the way i'm feeling
if only you knew the half of what i've been through
what my life has been like
y'all would know to think twice
something i wish i would've done
i really think i've lost, but in reality i've won
because of the simple fact that there is the sayin'
you learn from your mistakes
now that i know, i wont do it again
'cause i know what's at stake
people probably think that i'm a menace to society
but maybe you should take the time to discover the other side of me

-Casey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you're doing wrong on the outside, the best thing you can do is lose at what you're trying, not 'cause you deserve more pain but so you can start doing right again or maybe even for the first time — 'cause it's not your fault if all your teachers in the street were lying. You've learned the truth the hard way, and now it doesn't matter what they say.



This Painful Rock Bottom

I hit rock bottom last year when I was sent off to Salt Lake City, Utah to live with my older sister. It started out with a fight me and my mom had.

The police were called and they were trying to find somewhere for me to stay temporary until me and my mom got better. After riding around in the back of a police car for about what seemed like four hours they finally reached my stepfather who was my older sister's dad.

I lived with him for about a week until he got tired of me and sent me to live with my older sister (Julia) who was 20 at the time. She had two kids and could not handle another (teenager). So she sent me to live with my older brother (Tony) while staying with him some problems came up and I was sent to live with my older cousin (Jason) and his family. I had many problems with his wife so I went back to live with my sister (Julia) after that I hit rock bottom and ran away back to California to live with my mom.

-Green

From The Beat: Green, we're not surprised that after all that you felt like you hit rock bottom. It's a terrible feeling to feel you don't have a place in the world. When you're young, all you want is a safe and loving home, and instead you just kept getting bounced because everyone else was caught up in their own lives. We're so sorry you had to go through that. It may take some time, maybe quite a few years, but we can promise you that you will create your o

i'm trying to give you a chance
but to be honest i'm not
letting my guard down
'cause i really don't want to be hurt again

My Heart

i have been through so much
i have given my heart to a female
but all she did was make it sore to touch
this pain i can't endure
sometimes i feel like what's the point in my loving anymore
how can such a beautiful person be so cruel
and break my strongest tool
my heart —
why can't i find someone to love me with no complication
i search high and low but can't find the person who can give
me dedication i'm trying to give you a chance
but to be honest i'm not letting my guard down
'cause i really don't want to be hurt again
yeah i said it and i mean it
don't get me wrong i cherish females to death
but sometimes y'all can be demons
it seems like i look for love in all the wrong places
because one little mistake and all feelings of love erases
maybe i shouldn't blame all females for one mistake
but my heart is like a crayon, real easy to break
but i will make this vow to you if you make a vow to me
i will give you a chance to prove yourself different from the rest but please don't disappoint me

-Casey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The craziest part about a loving human heart is you've got to give it away again and again even after it's been broken. Or maybe the craziest part is how it can heal, and even when you thought you could never love again, you love for real.

Countdown

I have twelve days 'till court. Afraid of the judge. Don't want to be here forever. Stuck in my room, I think how I'll change, knowing that as soon as I get released, everything I promised myself will go right out the window. Wanting to do good. Wishing, hoping, dreaming of freedom!

-Gina

From The Beat: Gina, if you already know that all your promises for change are empty ones, then why even bother to leave? We can assure you that if you don't keep those promises, you'll be spending a lot more of your time dreaming of freedom rather than experiencing it as you should.

My Crazy Life

Life is unmanageable.
Adults always telling us what to do.
Experimenting. Conformity ruling us.
Drugs messing with our minds.
Always trying not to fall behind.
Can't wait till I take control.
Get ahead and reach my goals.
Life is what you make of it.

-Nenie

From The Beat: If you can't wait to take control, then what are you waiting for? Take control from this moment on. Don't surrender your mind to the control of drugs. Don't surrender your body to the control of strangers. You have it your power to control your own destiny. Do it!

Reality Hits

Up until now, the game was nothin'. Lying, cheating, thieving, beating, drugging and bad. What was fun and "cool" isn't anymore. Trouble comes in little fractions of the worst. Getting locked up is when it hits, realizing, "what was fun?" It's not comforting having what you want and doing bad to get it, and paying in the restriction of your own life.

The "crest" made me realize the reality of what comes from a "don't care life." Now I think clear because right and wrong is obvious now, and thinking before doing is better than being in a cell. What is mostly gonna keep me from this hole is the fact that girls are a must for me. I love chicks and I'm not coming back to this place.

-P-Rasta

From The Beat: Yes, one of the worst things about lock-ups (especially those for adolescents) is the unnatural separation from the opposite sex, depriving you of the socializing skills you'll need in the world. But now that you see clearly, you should never have to be in this all-male world again. Good luck.

I Wish

I wish I could wear my own clothes
And be on the outs where anything goes
Stop poppin' pills which discontinue my flows

-Ghost Face

From The Beat: What's keeping you from making this wish come true?

What I'll Do

I'm sitting in my room
Waiting and waiting for them to open my door
And when that time comes, I just don't know what I'll do
I want to stay out
I want to do good
I want to live my life the way I want
But I just don't know if I can do that
I want to do bad
It's more fun to do bad
It's like the bad takes over
I also live for the moment
I don't think of the bad that can come out of it
I only think of what is happening at that time
And that costs me a lot of my life
Just look at me now

-Shaggy

From The Beat: Your tight poem says that you already know everything that we have to tell you. You have the knowledge but, as you make clear, knowledge may not be enough. A wise man once told us to know the consequences of your acts and, if you're prepared to take them, then go ahead and act. But if you're not prepared for those consequences (which could be much more serious than the hall), then you have nothing to complain about when they occur.

Time Capsule

In my time capsule I would put a thizzle, a thong, a picture of my man, a drawing of SSF, a pic of Mac Dre, chucks and my pack of "Cools" cigarettes.

-Ashley

From The Beat: Yes, all these things would serve to remind you of your life of 50 years earlier. We bet, though, when you dig up this treasure chest, you'll be embarrassed by some of its contents. What do you think will surprise you the most in 50 years about what you'd find in your own time capsule?

The Game Of Life

I live my life full speed to the fullest
I'm flying through life like a bullet
People tell me I need to cool it
But I always be raisin' hell
So they put me in jail
And have me waitin' for mail

Ya see, life is a game
And we're all playin' the same
And I hate when people try to change wit' the game
What they haven't figured out is that the game don't change

-Jesse

From The Beat: As long as you take life as a game — instead of a gift worth more than diamonds — you can't win. We agree that "da game don't change," but that's very different from saying that you can't change. You are a human being, with the full range of human emotions and possible choices as every other human being. We know what you are capable of becoming (both positive and negative), but only you know which of those potentials will be realized.

Talkin' To Myself

Talkin' to my inner self. I don't usually talk to my inner self. I think the only times that I can talk to my inner self is when I'm alone or when I'm here. Sometimes I just sit down and start thinkin' about all the things that I have done on the outs, kickin' it with the homies, and all the good and bad shhh that I have done in my entire life.

Sometimes I just stand by my window and start thinkin' of what I can change in my life or how to do them better next time. I remember all the good times that I used to have with the homies and then I ask myself, am I always going to be the same vato that I am now, always lookin' for trouble, runnin' away from the jura. But then I realized that we all someday gonna get caught by karma. Ain't no matter how good or bad I have been. We all got to pay some day. What goes around comes around.

-Pezukin

From The Beat: We hope that your belief in karma isn't an excuse for continuing the life that has led you to this still-temporary state of slavery you're now living under. If karma is a real force, then you'd better spend some time balancing your scales with some positivity so that the good you do will come back to you.

Just Can't Wait

I'm almost out
I've got so little time
Then I'm gone forever
I will never come back
I know everybody says that
But this time I've had my wake-up call
I'm sick of this place
I never want to come back
I've got a life I need to live
All this place is doing is messing my life up
I just want to get my life straight
I want to start my family
Get a job
Get a house
And live a good life
I want to start my family in Minnesota
Because that's where I'm from
And I've got family in Minnesota
It's cheaper and feels more homey than California
And this is how I plan my life
And I hope that it all goes well

-Shaggy

From The Beat: We hope you cut both your pieces out and tape them to your bedroom mirror. That way, when you're tempted by those things you wrote in the first piece, you can reread the second piece and remember just why you are willing to sacrifice today's instant pleasures for tomorrow's long and fruitful life. Good luck!

A Short Story On Me

What's good with you, Beat? If y'all don't know, the name Justin, aka Lil' Chino, feel me?

I was born in Hong Kong on Dec. 9, 1989. I was just more than a year old when I was adopted and brought over to the Bay Area of Northern California. So basically I'm from here, raised off the street, feel me. I live in Millbrae. I'm really never home. I got a place to go to all the time in San Bruno where I learned a lot of the things that got me in here (The Hall). I also learned my street smarts there and all through the Bay.

When I was young, I was introduced to a lot of this. So growing up I thought a lot of this was fun and some things I thought were right. Basically I witnessed too many negative things at a young age, starting at 10 or 11. I'm 16 now and I'm locked up, this time for a stolo (stolen vehicle). I've been here for almost two months and got a break for only a month left. I almost got 6-9 months at camp.

I got one word that I need to apply. It's change. I know what to change and I've known for a while, but I never can do it. I always want to go back to the days and not the change it at all. But now look when I don't change.

-Justin

From The Beat: You know, Justin, sometimes what you need — beyond the knowledge you already have — is a network of support. We wish you could find a way to come to our offices in San Francisco when you get out of here. Not only could we use your skills and thinking and experience, but we believe you could use the support that comes from being around others who have been where your are now (or, at least close enough that they can understand where you're coming from). That offer is open to you, but whether you take us up on it or not, we hope you don't try to make the changes you know you must make (if you don't want to give your freedom and control away again) all by yourself. It is easier to step into the unknown when others are walking alongside you.

Life

Life is the world we're living in
It could be bad, but it could be good
But it's only up to you to choose

-Taz

From The Beat: But how do you choose, Taz? The way you write it, it makes it seem so easy to choose between the good life and the bad, but experience tells us it isn't nearly that easy. Tell us how you've made your choices in the past, and how you plan to make them in the future.

My Life

Everybody always said my life was easy, but I always tell them I have it hard. I tell them, "Try having a broken family, try having to drink or smoke your problems away. Try getting gang raped and having to run away from your problems." By the time I'm done, everyone is crying. That's when I tell them, "Welcome to my life."

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: Of course your life has not been easy, Brown Eyes. Few people's lives are (though some are harder than others). But it's time, now that you are almost grown, to recognize your own contributions to making your life even harder than it needed to be. The past is the past; you cannot change it. The future is yet to be written.

Lil' Carnal

How you been? Well you know how I've been, running the streets. Well, dispensa for not being able to be there for you, but I love you y te extrano. Here I am in these locked rooms when I can be out there with you, watching over you, making sure you fine, pero no, ke necia era, porque la keria kikiarla con los homies (but, naw, how hard-headed I was kicking it with the homies…) instead of being by your side.

You know I'm down, and you see me, you wanna be down too. But Mijo, you just nine years old. You can't be doing what I'm doing in the streets. You too young and I love you too much to let you fall in this game. You my carnal, that's till the end of time. You think it's firme living in the streets, pero la neta, it ain't. It's hard, and it ain't always fun. You gotta be hard, and here you just live to die. You live by the gun and you die by the gun, and now I got a gut feeling that if I keep on living this life, I'ma die. So if I pass and die and don't say my goodbyes, just know I loved you till the end of time.

-Morenita

From The Beat: How down are you? How hard are you? Are you hard enough to listen to a little truth that hurts, 'cause here it is. By the life you say you're down for, by the choices you're still making, you are paving the way for this nine-year-old child to follow you into the streets, into the hall, into jail and into prison. That will be your legacy, and not these fine words of love you claim to have. We say "claim" (even though we believe your expressions of love are sincere) because what you're really telling this youngster (by your deeds and not your words) is that you love something more than him, and that you're willing to sacrifice him for that love. We're sorry to be so tough, but the "do as I say not as I do" model is nothing more than double talk. Reread this sad piece, and then make a choice. Whether you like it or not, you ARE his role model, so what behavior do you want him to model? Choose wisely for him if not for yourself!

Almost Out

I'm almost out and I can't wait to yell it out my mouth. I'm being impatient but that's OK, as long as I know I'm going to be free. I want the world to know that my name is Justin, also known as Lil' Chino. Look for that name. My CD's comin' out. It explains my past and all of my pain, but it's a bowl of cereal 'cause there's poems in The Beat. They come from my heart and I put it on these sheets. So now I'm done. Got nothin' else to say. Till next week, take it day by day.

-Justin

From The Beat: You have a lot to give, Justin, but first you owe it to yourself to take back control of a life you have too willingly handed to the will of others — both your "homies" and your counselors in the hall. Take control of your own life. We need what you can teach.

The Things I Want To Do

I would like to change my lifestyle, the way I live and act towards my family and how I treat my mom. I want to be a happy child, not always fightin' or getting' jumped every week. But I will always smoke my drugs (weed) and maybe pop a pill here or there. I just want to be happy and live a life not in here, but on the outs with my husband. And I hate cigarettes.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We applaud the desire you express to change, and especially to stop hurting your mom who has sacrificed so much for you. At the same time, we worry when we read that the desire to change is conditional, that some of the things that could easily lead you into trouble (especially those pills) are still on your agenda. Why do you love weed

Please Tell Me Why

Oh Lord, please tell me why we can't unite
Got to tell the whole world so we don't have to fight
Tell me why we got to go through this.
Tell me why we got to smoke this to get high.
All we see it's the sky. Telling lies to me
Wasn't never there for me. Time is running out.
Got to go through this.
Now please tell me why I got a gun up on my waist.
Got to have respect for our jefitas .
We put it down for Latinos. We low profile.
We don't have the same mothers but we came from the same place.
O' Lord please tell me why.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Okay, La Dreamer, you are asking some very important questions, but can we ask you some in return? The Lord you pray to, does He love Latinos more than others? Did He create some human beings to be victims for other human beings? Does His plan define self-respect (not to mention respect for others) as packing a gun? Has He designed the world so that humans are at each others' throats, or is that the result of ignoring His design? Aren't you putting yourself above the Lord by living by your own code and then asking Him why you face the consequences you do? Aren't you asking for His guidance towards an easier life, while disrespecting the answer He gives? Don't you have things upside down?

What Is Life?

Life is a gift. God gave us a life for a reason. Live life to the fullest. Life is too short to be doing things that will get you in trouble. God gave us life to do something successful.

-Brown Kid

From The Beat: We hope you live your life according to the philosophy you spell out here. Did you come to this believe after you lost your freedom or before? If you've known this for a while, why did you end up here? Well, whatever the answer to that question is, what matters is what you do from this moment forward.

My Opinion

What is the worst crime a person can commit? Murder? Child molestation? Rape? Assault?

I believe that child molestation is the worst crime a person can commit because that person can be traumatized forever. The victim who is molested can lead to suicide or can also grow up as a molester because they think it's right.

People think, "Why molestation and not murder?" Yes, murder is bad, but a grown-up molesting little kids, that's disgusting!

-Sunshine

From The Beat: Do you mean a grown killing a little kid isn't disgusting? We agree with your description of what can happen to children who are sexually molested, but we also think that killing a person leaves all who loved that person partially murdered themselves. You're right to say that children who are molested often grow up to molest other children. If that's the case, how can you balance the disgust you feel for the adult's crime with the sympathy you feel for the person who was molested as a child and who grew up to be that adult?

Life

When I talk to my inner self, I usually make a decision within. I talk about the mistake that I made in the past and how I could fix it. After I address a situation to myself I sometimes feel better about it.

-Adrian

From The Beat: This is a very good use of your time, Adrian. It shows that you are not wasting it. Good for you!

Becoming A Father

I just found out I'm going to be a father. I've lived with this woman for a year and a half. My baby is due August 1–5. This is my big wake-up call on life. Now I have to grow up and become a man in the next month or so.

Don't get me wrong. I'm happy and can't wait to have my son in my arms for the first time. I'm going to be the best father I can, and be there for my son. I don't have to worry about having a job and a place to live because I've got a job with my father and I have enough money in my bank account to get a house for my baby, girlfriend and me.

-Sneaks

From The Beat: What does it mean to "become a man in the next month or so?" How does one "become a man?" Holding your baby in your arms is a fantastic feeling, one of those major "highs" that few other experiences can equal. But it is only the beginning of a life-long responsibility that is often filled with frustration and difficulty as well as wonder and joy. You can't keep doing the things that have brought you to the hall and hope to keep your promise to "be there" for your son. So tell us, what is are the first steps you plan to take on that road to becoming a man?

Junior Would Want You To Know

Why did you do this to us?
Why weren't we enough?
Why did it end this way?
We wanted you to stay
I remember my tummy
Would always hurt when we would fight
He hated how we put hands on each other
But he loved it when you would
Touch my tummy late at night
Back then it felt so right
He loved when you're around
But since you left
I feel I can't find my solid ground
I miss you so much
I want you back in my life
But I don't think you're coming home
But I know he'd want you to know
He's gonna miss you when he gets older
When his heart gets a little colder
He'll be just like you
Baby, it's time for you to get a clue
You promised me we'd be a family
So what are you going to choose?

-By Us (Me and Miguel, Jr., your unborn son)

From the Beat: What a terrible prediction to make about the child you are carrying, that "when his heart gets a little colder he'll be just like" the father that made him then abandoned him! Children having children only perpetuates a cycle that leads to places like this, so it always makes us sad to read stories like this. How will you guide your son, by what you say to him or by what you do? If you continue to live the life that causes you to give up your freedom to the system, then it won't be the father that leads him to jail, but you, the mother. We hate to put so much responsibility on your shoulders, but you took it on yourself when you made the choice (or let him make the choice for you) to bring a new life into the world. There is nothing he will need more than your steady presence in his life, which means there is nothing that you need more than to put your own needs to the side and put his needs above yours. This is no easy task for anyone, so we hope that the love you will undoubtedly have for your son will be greater than the love you have for the life you've been living. Only time will tell.

In My Room

In my room
On my bed
I die a lil' bit
Only time I can come out
Is when I need to shhh
I will lay on my bed
And think about my life
Sometimes I wish
I just had a knife
I am a big joker
Not a big smoker
Fourth of July
My friends gettin' high
He did crack
Now he's walkin' down the track
with a monkey on his back
Life's a leach
I just ate a peach
It tasted swell
Juvie is hell
Now I'm in the street
But I won't get beat
My car's in sixth, going two-oh-two
Uh oh! I've lost a shoe!
I got the fan on
But it's still really hot

-George

From The Beat: Juvie's hell, but, then, you chose it/You're in control and everyone knows it/ Live your life like it's a joke/And spend more time with locked-up folk/You know why you're here so stop your bitchin'/If it's too hot, then get out the kitchen!

To You From Me

Que onda, carnal? Well, I know we don't really get along, 'cause you let this gang life get in between us, between family. That ain't right, pero we still familia and living this life ain't right.

You suppose to be my rival, but forget that. We familia. I love you no matter what. You can hurt me, embarrass me, talk smack to me or about me, but I'm still here when you need somebody. I'll be there when you need back-up or somebody beat. I'll be there. You need a ride? I'll be there for anything. I'll be there no matter what. I'm there. Just hit me up. Te amo carnal, till the end of time.

-Morenita

From The Beat: This is a sad piece from more than one perspective. First, that gangs have come between family, putting one on one side and one on another reminds us of the brutality of the American Civil War when brothers killed brothers and sisters killed sisters because of some abstract ideas, some "principles" that aren't based on principle at all. And then, second, your willingness to beat up someone because someone else tells you to (whether it is the family member you're addressing or your fellow gangsters) only confirms that you are not your own person, you are not in control of your own life, you are not exercising anything close to leadership. You are a follower, doing the bidding of others, and followers always end up holding the bag for the shot callers, just like you're doing right now in here.

Much Love Always

Is it okay to cry? Yes, it's okay to cry, to let your feelings come out.

It's hard not to cry. Why? Because we have too much feelings in our lives. In the world everybody live a crazy life. But everybody stays living.

Mi vida is very crazy. I can't think and can't eat. Got to worry about my feelings going all over the place. I'm going insane. So I'm going to let it all come out. Just cry on me. I'll be by your side, a friend on your shoulder. You can lean on me 'cause I'll be there, thick through thin.

Always 'n forever.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: But if you are going insane, how can you offer your shoulder to cry on? Won't their tears only hurt you worse? What do you mean when you say you're going insane? What are the symptoms of your "insanity"?

The Worst Crime

The worst crime a person can commit is murder because once someone is dead they're gone forever. The family of that person will be severely hurt and traumatized. I think a person would kill another human because they have extreme hate for that person or that person is just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I don't think a person can be forgiven for murder because he has taken away a life of another human being. If someone in my family committed murder I would be disgusted with them and never talk to them or visit them in jail.

-George

From The Beat: You would think that one could only kill another human being out of a deep, deep hatred (like you said), but then how can you hate someone you've never met? We're talking about the killing that goes on with rival gangs on our streets, or "rival" religions on the streets of Baghdad? Sometimes, we just accept the prejudices of our role models and carry out ancient beefs even when we don't know the individuals involved. Can you think of any solution to this learned hatred?

I'm Back

I'm back for a violation
I was on EMP, losing my patience
I'm kind of glad to be back
Because the gang task force was on my sack
When I get out I got to keep it coo'
The police is always trying to play me like a foo'
So I got to step up my game
and not get caught up
I hate police with a passion
They know I'm never missin' in action
But I will never drop a dime
So just give me the time

-Stoney

From The Beat: Can the police play you if you don't give them any reason to? Are you just an innocent who suffers from too much police attention, or are you contributing to that attention? When you boast about never being missing in action, aren't you saying that you're playing a deadly game that invites the attention you hate so much? Did you violate on purpose so that you could come back and escape all that unwanted task force

It's OK to Cry

It's okay for guys to cry, even though some people say if a guy cries it means they ain't tough. But they are just expressing how they feel, so boy, just do it!

-Lil' T

From The Beat: It's probably good advice to give boys to say it's okay to cry. So, why do you think so many boys find it hard to cry in front of others? Who do you think is tougher, the boy that holds it in, or the boy who lets it out?

Disgusting

The worst crime I think is rape and child molestation because it's disgusting and girls would not trust you anymore. And if you get caught it's all bad because you will do a lot of time.

-Jack

From The Beat: Can't you make the same argument about other crimes, like murder? If get caught killing someone, it's much worse! Anyway, we agree that rape is a terrible crime.

La Vida

This crazy life I'm living isn't the life to live, but it's the life I'm living. Growing up in a good household but having another life in the streets. Now here I am thinking what the hell I'ma do. My lil' carnal, just nine years old and already kicking it in las calles. He a down-ass vato, but he young and living the life. Followed my steps. But I don't want him to get caught up. So I'ma try to do good for him, pero there is no promises and for the record, you mess with my lil' carnal, you'll be seeing me. Orale, pues, until next time. Alrato.

-Morenita

From The Beat: As we've said to you elsewhere on these pages, you have a big decision to make: Your lifestyle (and the certainty that this nine-year-old child will follow), or a change that at least brings with it the hope that he won't do as you have done. We're sorry to say, but it seems to us that by going down the road you've traveled, you've already messed with this "lil' carnal," so how will you take yourself on? Certainly not by telling your homies to never back down and don't get caught when they break the law! We didn't even publish that piece because it's like telling this child you claim to love so much to go for it in the streets. Come on, Morenita, there is absolutely no way you can have it both ways. When we read things like that, we wonder which is the child, you or he?

Can't Have This Unless There Is That

Sunny days wouldn't be as special if it wasn't for rain
Joy wouldn't feel so good if it wasn't for pain
You can't love something unless there is hate
Courage overcomes doubt 'cause it's not the same
There couldn't be a frown if you couldn't turn it upside down
If you didn't have peasants there wouldn't be a king with a crown
Can you live life to the fullest if you take things for granted
You wouldn't have a memory if there weren't things to forget
Laughing wouldn't feel so funny if there wasn't things to cry about
Would there be such a whisper if you couldn't just stand up and shout
And death gotta be easy cause life is hard
An end gotta have a beginning but the end is just the start

-Justin

From The Beat: This is the yin and yang of life. So, Justin, with all that you've experienced, including your episodes of incarceration, what will balance bring in your future? Perhaps only those who have experienced the degradation of imprisonment can truly appreciate the joy of freedom. But what does it mean to appreciate freedom? Does it require something different in the way you either look at life or live it?

When I Die

When I die don't you cry
Just remember all those good times we were together
I know I wouldn't be able to see the light again
I'm going to meet you in the other spiritual life
Appreciate your life, 'cause we live to die once in our life

-Lil' T

From The Beat: We think the most valuable advice in this short poem is "appreciate your life." We wish more young people would appreciate this gift. If they did, fewer children would be locked up, and there would be far less death and destruction on those mean streets.

Indifference

I think that the worst crime one can commit is ignoring someone in need of assistance. I think this is the worst crime because it is, in a way, the base of each crime. For example, the crime of murder.

If you are killing someone, then you are turning your back on their need for help. It doesn't only tie into legal crimes, but also other "crimes." If everyone turned their back on others, then there would be no teachers. For example, if one man learned how to solve world hunger but did not tell anyone.

There have been but a few well-known people who have committed this crime. One of the earliest and worst among men is Judas when he turned his back on Jesus. Or Benedict Arnold, when he betrayed America during the American Revolution. He turned his back on the colonists who needed help to victory.

-Jason

From The Beat: This is one of the most thoughtful answers The Beat has ever received to this question. We had never thought of it quite the way you have explained it, but after thinking about it, we agree with you. Turning your back on someone in need is like turning your back on all religions and all concepts of God, which are based on loving one another. How did you come up with this thought? Have you ever been guilty of this "worst crime"?

Two Brothers From Another Mother

I have two brothers from another mother
They're practically blood with me
Even though all three of us are different colored
We been by each other's sides all the time
We known as the three stooges, my partnas in crime
This dedicated to my brothers P.J. and Joey
Love y'all to death and you know I ain't being phony
I'd take a bullet for them or even get shot
They my brothers from another mother for life
And that's just off top!

-Justin

From The Beat: We can feel the sincerity and depth of your love in your words, Justin. But we wonder why love like this is so often expressed in terms of taking a bullet or dying for them. What good are you to them if you die? Can't you make an equally strong commitment to live for them, to make a legitimate life for yourself so you'll always be there for them? Sometimes we think that it is easier to visualize yourself dying for those you love than living for them. You have it in you to make that harder choice. We hope you do.

I think that the worst crime one can commit is ignoring someone in need of assistance.

The Hall

I cannot take this anymore
Looking at these white walls
Looking out my scratched up window
At the world I'm missing

I cannot take this pain anymore
Pain from missing my loved ones
Pain from being pulled away
Pain from this place

I cannot be who I want anymore
I cannot act the way I want
I cannot dress the way I want
I cannot talk the way I want

I feel like I'm forced to be someone I'm not
All this place is doing is making me not give a damn
I feel like they are trying to brainwash me
I feel like my heart, mind and soul have been pulled apart

-Sneaks

From the Beat: What you are experiencing is very destructive. Who is the "you" that you feel you're not being allowed to be? If being yourself includes victimizing others in any way (we're not saying it is, but IF it is), then by you being who you want to be you're keeping someone else from being who s/he wants to be. There has to be some compromise in our lives because we don't live alone in this world. No one can live entirely freely because of the limits our society, our culture, our laws, our upbringing impose on us. Are you contributing to your own sense of being pulled apart? Is there anything you can do to reduce the power the system has over you, and therefore regain your sense of control?

Please Be My Wifey

-Dreamer

From The Beat: After careful consideration, Dreamer, we chose not to publish this piece. We would have had to take so many inappropriate lines out of it, that in the end, it wasn't worth it. You are such a good writer, Dreamer, and you usually write about such serious things and such meaningful topics, this just wasn't up to your standards (or ours)!

Forever Dated

And now it seems the struggle has gotten twice as hard.
God's gift to me. God's gift to you, my love, is true.
So they say I'm affiliated, so to speak. Gang related for what?
And if I was to stop now, it was all for nothing.
Forever me and you, girl. It's a bond that can't be broken.
Days turn into weeks. Weeks turn into months. Months turn into years.
I've been wishing on a star and there you are.
Now it seems you are just so far.
Driftin' on a memory, hopin' it will set me free.
But the more I think of you
the more I start to understand what love is really about.
For better or for worse I'm still here.
And guess what? Forever I will remain. But what does love mean?
Does it sit on a shelf at the top of my closet, or is it just another word?
Can I be my own friend and need no one else?
And if so, will I ever get tired of myself, and put me on the shelf?
Isn't that where love belongs? In my closet, on top of the shelf?

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Wow, dreamer, this is hella deep! The question, "What does love mean?" is probably one of the oldest questions human beings have been asking — and, as far as we know, there are as many answers as there are people asking. What makes your answer so interesting is those last references to putting your love on a shelf in your closet... What do you mean? What idea are you conveying?

Wishin' On A Star

Wishin' on a star, time seems so far
Baby girl, you know I did not mean to
The ghost of God's gift
Why you still haunting me?
Instead come back to me
Come back and see
The roses was nice
The benzo was fly
Stayed spoiling you like no other
The pain truly hurts
The cut's so deep
Never healing wound
Endless nights of loneliness and tears
Had a homie light weight juiced
When I received that letter from you
It started like this:
"Yours only, but Papi, I'm pregnant.
It's a baby boy."
Memories had me juiced
Thoughts had me lifted
This has to be a gift from God Himself
She said:
"Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever
Would she do anything to break my heart."
Solidness to the fullest, never droppin' no dimes

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Like all good poetry, your poem is filled with personal references that, without explanation, are hard for us to understand. And, like all good poetry, it leaves us wishing for that understanding. We would love to read a prose piece (not poetry) that fills in some of our questions: Who is she? Whose baby was she carrying? Did she deliver or abort? What are the details of this story?

I Think

I think that when you die you go to hell or heaven.

-Gerardo

From The Beat: And we think you're giving us a lazy man's response to a serious question. If you can only produce one sentence in a 45-minute class, then you really haven't begun to think...

What I Cry For

I cry 'cause I'm happy
I cry 'cause I'm sad
I cry 'cause it hurts
I cry 'cause I got feelings and
It's OK to cry, so just cry

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Do you ever find yourself crying for no apparent reason at all?

The Worst Crimes: Rape And Child Molestation

In my opinion, I think the worst crime is rape and child molestation. I think it's the worst crime because if someone doesn't want to be touched and is forced to have sex, that may make the person traumatized for the rest of their life and in the future destroy their love life. They may never trust another human being for the rest of their life.

Also, when an adult touches a minor in the sense of touching a child, that is even worse because a child wouldn't know what's going on and the child will be very traumatized and scared of other people for the rest of their life. Plus, a child should never experience sexual contact, especially with an adult because that is extremely disgusting.

-Victor

From The Beat: We agree with your description of these crimes, and the serious and life-long effects that they can cause. But we wonder why murder is not on your list since it permanently affects everyone who ever loved the victim, and for the rest of their lives.

Can't Write

I can't write anything down and I don't know why.
Too many things running through my head all the time.
Kind of like a cyclone of thought that sometimes makes me want to cry.
Like the fact that my disease is pinching me off
and I might sooner than later die.

-Ghost Face

From The Beat: After telling us that you can't write anything down, you put down this very tight little poem! Can you talk about the disease that may cut your life short? (We are familiar with the disease of the streets that is cutting many lives short, but it seems like you're talking about something else...)

Mom

I found out you don't want me
I feel like a fool
Just because you gave birth to me
You need to get a clue
I don't want to see you any more
You hurt me way too much
You gave me up when I was one
And didn't give a damn
But you tryin' now
And putting me in your life
So I took it
Then you turned me in
Without even a frown
I love you mom but I'm sorry
But we can never be true
But I want you to know
That I will always love you
Love your #1 girl

-Taz

From The Beat: The fact that your mother gave you up at one (whether she gave a damn or not — and we'd be willing to bet that she did) is a pain that can't be undone. But the fact that she came back into your life and then turned you in is more on you than on her. What responsibility to you share for giving her cause to turn you in?

Joy And Pain

Joy and pain
Is like sunshine and rain
Happy or sad
Or good or bad
Either way I don't know what to choose
Because I'm so confused
Our love is so simple
You'd rather make it hard
Loving you is like a battle
We both end up with scars
Joy and pain
Back and forth
Sometimes I feel like a queen
Other times I feel less than dirt
Please choose how you feel about me
Do you wanna be with me or not?

-Nicolasa

From The Beat: Why do you want to be with someone who makes you feel less than dirt? How do you feel about yourself? That's the key question. (In future, we will not be publishing these personal love letters that are best put onto paper and sealed in an envelop which you stamp and send. Now, if you can take your experiences from this and turn them into something that teaches, that's a different story.)

Love So Strong

Love so strong
Emotions so deep
Heaven above sent you to me
Together forever is what you said we would be
But on Father's Day, I found out you lied to me.

Right when I left to go to Colorado, you got with some girl and got her pregnant.

How could you forget about all the love I have for you?
I thought you knew that my love is so true.
After four years all I got now is eyes full of tears.
You used to show me love, but now my heart seems to be all alone.
Without your love, without your touch,
my heart seems to be in need of so much.
I'm sorry for loving you. I'm sorry for being faithful,
I'm sorry for even speaking to you in the first lace.
Please just leave me alone now. I need to stop loving you,
even though it's the hardest thing I think I'll ever have to do.

-Angel

From The Beat: You know, Angel, if you want to stop loving this liar, we suggest you stop writing poems about him. He's shown his true hand, and however painful it must be, it's the reality you have to deal with. Lots and lots of boys (maybe the majority) are in the same category as this cheater, but not all are in that category. And we predict that you will find someone who truly respects and loves you, and that when you do, you'll be amazed how quickly you can put this loser behind you.

Right when I left to go to Colorado, you got with some girl and got her pregnant.

Females

I hate females even if I am one
They fake, grimy an' can't keep they legs closed
They just don't fit to any of my folks category
I mean I have plenty of homegirls
But they not all there with me
Yadaimean
I was raised by vatos
Everything I know I learned from all the old G's
Gained my respect
An' agreed at w'at the homeboys say
'Bout "rippers" on the block
They love me an' I'm the one they come to
For anything an' everything
I love my homeboys to the fullest
I hate how females take the funk
Try to be somebody they not
An' get mad when they dead, raped
Or got a train ran through them
But is all they fault
They ain't got no respect
They say they are down-ass homegirls
I hate females
They too dirty for me

-Giggles

From The Beat: The problem we have with this piece is that it rests on stereotypes and generalizations. Does your mother fit the description of what you hate? Is she a female? How 'bout you, your grandmother, Sojourner Truth, Mary McCloud Bethune and Mother Teresa? Are they too dirty for you? Be careful of making sweeping generalizations based on limited exposure. As far as your view that girls who are raped (singly or by a bunch of boys at once) bring it on themselves, we could never agree with that. What you are saying is that the boys (and men) who commit this crime (and yes, it's a crime) are not responsible for their own actions. We can assure you that they are, and that the law properly assigns guilt to the rapist and not to the victim. We think this inability or unwillingness to accept responsibility for our own acts, our own choices, is itself a kind of crime, a way of blaming others for our chosen behavior. Do you love yourself? We hope so, because if you do, then this poem cannot be true!

Leaving

I'm leaving mother, hear me go
I'm leaving now, to slay the foe
I'm going to fight the battles high and low
Please mom, let me say my say

I'll cry and cry and dry my tears
I'll sail my steams with no fears
But remember...
I love you mom, all the way

-Clarence

From The Beat: This is a sweet poem to your mother, and we hope she gets to see it. But what is the foe you are leaving to slay? We hope you are talking about your own demons, your own poor choices that have led you here. If you slay that foe, you will never have to come back.

Crying

Crying is a relief of stress for me. I feel comfortable crying in front of anyone. I usually cry when I'm very upset or sad. I cry a lot when topics that I'm uncomfortable talking about come up. Locking myself in my room, listening to depressing music, just to keep those tears rolling down my cheeks keeps me in a sad mood but makes me feel better.

-Mk

From The Beat: It's an interesting observation that you promote your own tears which, even though they keep you sad, also make you feel better. We don't want to push you into that sad emotional state, but what are some of those "topics" that make you cry?

Tears of Pain

Tears of pain fall down my face like rain
I try to hide my pain
I told you how I feel but you couldn't keep it real
Now I'm sittin' here, wishin' you could be my man
And wishin' you could hold my hand
The words I want to say won't come out
I want to shout but all that come down
Are my tears of pain

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: We wish you'd spend a little more time thinking about how to live responsibly on the outs so you won't have to be writing sad love songs from behind four walls. It's fair enough (at your age) to be obsessed by thoughts of love, but there is much more to life. Concentrate on getting yourself right. Until you truly start loving yourself (and the gift of life you were given), you'll continue to experience these "tears of pain."

Rhyme

Sittin' on my bed
Think about bread
Got some money
About ta get some honey
Yadadamean
Sittin' on my couch
Smokin' some green
And it's now December
Now I got to remember
I heard I'm getting' out
Now I got ta shout
People that do crack
Are layin' on they back
On the train track
Now it's fourth of July
And my homies getting' so high
I'm on the beach
Thinkin' about my peach
Now I'm in the shower
Standin' on a flower
Now I got a friend the snitch
Afraid tha he gon be in a ditch
Now it's Sunday
About to be Monday
Tuesday, Wednesday
Thursday, Friday
Got ma fan on but
It's still hella cold
Got ma pencil that I still got to hold
'Cause sittin' in my cell
Goin' through hell

-Devin

From The Beat: One, two, three four/There is an exit door/Five, six, seven, eight/ Don't pretend it's all your fate/Nine, ten, eleven, twelve/Who put you here but you, yourselves?

Gone With The Wind

You said that you're my friend
And that you would ride with me to the end
Until my life hit a back bend
Little did I know you were gone with the wind
Now I'm starting to learn little by little
And it all depends on the decisions that I make
That will determine what the outcome will be in the end
But a real friend would stand wit' you for better or for worse
But damn, I ain't got nothin' like that
So I feel that I'm cursed
Don't got a family that care or that's even aware
So don't you dare to even try to get close
'Cause I don't want to infect anyone with the worse curse
Of the sadness I put in this verse
So don't play with your life
'Cause you can end up like me
And have it almost end by the knife
Three inches in and one inch wide
Ever since this day I had lost all pride
People like to front just to go for the ride
But when shhh gets deep there's no one by my side
Sitting on the curb waiting to die
So I pray to the Lord, oh why, oh why
Don't you think that I'm too young to die
Man, I bet momma wouldn't even cry
Time movin' slow don't know where to go
Ended up on the front door
Of someone I didn't even know
Took me in till I was well enough to go
Look for the people I so called friends
Tryin' to shout to them that it was now the end
But didn't even try 'cause it really wasn't worth it
All I got to say they could always take and get baked
But down in their hearts and always in my mind
Is that they all fake

-Ghost Face

From The Beat: There are some important lessons to be learned from your near-fatal experience, and maybe you are learning them. Realizing that the decisions you make determine your fate is a huge step into adulthood. It takes you out from under the control of others who say they have your best interests at heart but don't. When you pray to your Lord, what is it exactly that you pray for? Do you only ask "Why?" When you look carefully at your choices, is that an honest question? Don't you already know a lot of the answer to that one? Maybe a better question would be "How?" How do I live my life so that I can have those things that every human being should have — a decent life in freedom? And if you asked that question, what do you imagine the Lord would answer? Are you prepared to hear the answer?

It's OK To Cry

You see no more tears in my eyes
There's no more left, I'm traumatized
It's always OK to cry
But I can't, my eyes are dry
I want to cry to get rid of all this sorrow
I'm looking for someone to lend me some tears I could borrow
The sorrows deep in my heart drive me insane
And my heart pumpin' pain through my veins
You see no more tears in my eyes
There's no more left, I'm traumatized
It's always OK to cry
But I can't, my eyes are dry
I know it takes a man to cry
But I've already cried my eyes dry

-Jesse

From The Beat: Crying can be a relief of stress and pain (though it will not "get rid of all this sorrow.") We wonder if, when the time is right, those tears that you have dammed up inside you will come pouring out in a flood of pain and relief. Keep working on yourself, Jesse, on making yourself the person you want to be so you can stay system-free. We think you can become the person you want to be, tears and all!

Talking To My Inner Self

Hey, how you doin'?
I'm so bored locked up in here.
They say you got a couple of months up in here.
Mom says she loves you, I wonder if it's true.
Remember when I only had you in my life?
Man you never betrayed me like those other fools did.
I'm so proud that you haven't gotten mad at any of these girls.
Just keep putting your head up, and that's the only thing you can do.

-Taz

From The Beat: Since we don't know who you are writing to or any of the details of what you refer to, we cannot comment... except to say that we will no longer publish these personal notes or letters. They have no value to a wider audience of Beat readers. So next time, drop your note in the mail and write something that applies to more than just two people.

Re-Mix

Oooh child, things are gonna get easier
Oooh child, things will get brighter
Just got to keep a straight face
And got to keep your head up
Keep your head up
Baby don't cry
Just keep that head up
Don't let it drop down
This is for all people that have feelings.
If you don't know how to show them,
just keep your head up.

I did a lil' re-mix of two of my favorite songs 'cause I know those songs motivate me in all kinds of ways. Well, I gots to kick rocks 'cause my time's up. Much love and respect. Yours always,

-Grumpy

From The Beat: How do these songs motivate you? Do they bring you up when you're feeling down? Do they motivate you to want to change anything about the way you live your life?

The Nightmares In My Eyes

Every time I close my eyes
I see all these nightmares and never dreams
Why is it that I have all these bad thoughts
Of family, friends and myself getting' hurt or getting' shot
How come I don't dream of happy or exciting things
Now when I lay my head down I'm afraid to go to sleep
Is it true that what you see in your sleep comes to life?
A lot of it was my past and hopefully this theory for the future isn't right
If so then my life is going to stay a terrible nightmare
Wishing to wake up, only left with my prayers

-Justin

From The Beat: Your prayers are not a bad place to start, Justin. Of course, no one can say what the future holds for any of us, whatever we think our dreams might be telling us. Our belief is that your dreams are far more tied to your past than to your future — except, of course, that one's past often predicts one's future. (That's what Shakespeare meant when he wrote, "What is past is prologue.") But one of the great and unique things about being human is that we can exercise choice and will. It's not so easy as saying, "I want this to happen, so it will happen," but even having said that, we still put a lot of faith in the human capacity for change. Of course, the more natural gifts you have to work with — intelligence, insight, self-awareness and the ability to be self-critical — the easier it is to make changes in your life. And you, Justin, are blessed with a plethora of natural gifts. What will you do with them?

Eyes, Can You See

Eyes can you see
Eyes can you tell
Underneath the flesh
Of all this stress

I look back and forth
For the cure on the rack
But it's not there
(this is not fair)
I try and go
But the time is so slow
For no one knows

Eyes can you see
Eyes can you tell
The pain that's underneath
The flesh of all this stress

Eyes will you see
The end of the pain
Or will you feel the new
Of the stress that caress
my brain
That gives me the strength
to leave it alone

-Black Berry

From The Beat: There is something quite mysterious about this poem, BB. We're especially intrigued by that last couple of lines. What is the new stress that is giving you the strength "to leave it alone," and what is "it"?

The Afterlife

They said hell is hot
But is heaven cold?
No one ever knows
Until you're gone... gone
And when you're gone
Does your soul drift off
To a better place
Or do you just forever fade
Away, away, away
Like a bird that's headed towards the sky
Or do you just die?
If so, why?

-Unknown

From The Beat: Anyone who can write like this should not be afraid to put his (her?) name to it. You've written a very deep poem about the unknown revealing a brain that is engaged and in gear. There is no reason not to take enough pride in these words to acknowledge that you wrote them. Next time...

I'm So Hot . . .

Being in the Hall got me so hot –why? 'Cause for one, I miss my girl too much. But the real reason why I picked this topic is 'cause a few of my ninjas got killed in less then 2-3 weeks. I really miss them boys. My solid cat, Doobie got busted in front of the house with his lil' brotha all ovar a bullshhh argument.

My lil' baby youngsta got hit by a car. He was like my lil brotha I miss him so much. I went to school with all of these cats, plus we did it all together from cutting school to poppin' pills, going to parties and getting shot at. But until I get back, I miss them boys. RIP Doobie, Lil' Jay and Mykool.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Damn, Lil' Solid, sometimes life doesn't seem fair. You've suffered a great loss, but what about your life? Could you be next? Never forget their lives and think about how fragile yours is. Be smart out there. There is a safer way to live life, like staying away from drugs and going to school everyday. That's a start. May they rest in peace and their memories live on.

My Flow

Dude, you like to steal
Dude, you is a thief
Dude you're a vegetarian you don't want beef
Especially wit me
I hits hard
You can ask yo momma
Cause that's my bond
You should already know
Playa hating suckas
Just hatin' 'cause he was 'bout to blow
They said don't trip
Ain't Will Smith
But I'm still the Fresh Prince
But not in Bel-Air
In Oakland we're all gangsters and OG's
Chillin '
And he be smoking on my block

-Unknown

From The Beat: You spit an awful flow, why you ask, 'cause you're in jail. Stop hating on others and start thinking about YOUR situation. You need your life to flow in another direction.

Another Chance?

I saw my PO today, he said he was going to give me another chance to be with my family, but I don't know what the judge is going to say. He might give me another chance or might send me to a group home, but not 'till next week, so, I'll write about it.

-Lil' Chukie

From The Beat: Lil' Chukie, all you can do is hang tight, wait and see. Be patient and on your best behavior. Don't do anything to ruin your chance. And, if you get the chance, then it is time to straighten up and fly right. What's your plan to not come back?

Staying Solid

Well I hope all behind these county walls doin cool! This be that Lil' Mousie from Livermore, comin' at y'all behind these East Bay County walls. To all just stay solid, keep praying to the Lord and do your time.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Also, remember why you are doing your time in the first place. Coping and staying solid is good, when you are in a tough situation, but allowing yourself to lose more and more time of your life, behind walls isn't too smart. Stay solid, pray and most importantly, learn from your mistakes. Put some knowledge in that brain of yours!

Do Overs

I wish I could start my life over from the point where I started to rob people and before I came to jail.

I wish I could do over when I was in middle school and I use to rob people and I had all this money. But it seemed like I couldn't keep it. I would always spend my money and if I could do one thing over if I would have saw Meezy the same day he got killed, I would have been right there and told him let's cut man.

That's all I got to say about the topic. I want to say is RIP Meezy. He was the greatest.

- Meezy's friend

From The Beat: Do-Overs seem like a great idea, "If only I could do over...". But actually the real value from making mistakes is learning from them. We may not be able to go back and change what happened, but we do have influence our future. We are sorry to hear about the loss of your friend – RIP Meezy.

This Is Rock Bottom

It seem like being in here is my "Rock Bottom", because it seem like I got my back against the wall and I'm fighting my way out. I'm going through problems and haters are making it worse.

People get mad 'cause I speak my mind and have a smart mouth. But if I don't speak for me who will?

-Aleshia

From The Beat: Aleshia, sorry we will not print the rest of your piece. It seems like YOU are simply hating on. Speaking your mind can be very honorable, but a big responsibility. If you are going to speak your mind, be careful what kind of things you fill your mind with. Your mind, just may get you deeper in trouble.

Fear Of An Ass Whoopin'

When I was younger I use to be afraid to get my ass whooped. Like everytime I would do something, like get suspended from school, my mom use to be right by the door, ready to tack my ass, but now that I'm older I am more mature.

I'm silly, but I don't give a damn 'cause that's me. I got so many whippings, but that still didn't help 'cause I'm still a boss, ya hear me.

-Young Hyfee

From The Beat: Those beatings were supposed to help keep you out of trouble. It probably wouldn't hurt for another one, so you learn how to stay out of the Hall. You may be a boss, the boss of yourself, but it appears that you aren't doing a very good job. You're smarted than that. Now is the time to give yourself a whipping and get your life straight. Be a boss and take control of your life – get out of the Hall and stay out.

Hood Definition

Hood: Project; The ghetto; Where I'm from; My home; Always welcome; A part of me and always respected.

-Raska

From The Beat: If you made two lists of positive and negative things about your hood, which would outweigh the other?

My Old 'Hood

Man I'm very mad because Valencia Gardens (in the Mission) is back up and I'm locked up in Juvenile Hall. Thinking about my set and I want to see all family and friends. And just be out to see all how it look I just can't wait to get out.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: Valencia Gardens looks a lot different, than back in the day. We hope when you return you will leave the ugliness, drugs and gangsta b-s alone, and be apart of the new generation in helping improve our/this community.

Fear

My fear is being locked up in an institution like this.
I wish I had no fears, because I hate the feeling of having fear. Because they will be with you for the rest of your life.
You will never be able to let go of your fears, because they are stuck to you like a piece of glue.

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: You make a good point. But sometimes people overcome their fears. For example fear of heights, fears of spiders. Overcoming your fear of being locked down in an institution is probably a good fear to hang on to. Perhaps it may keep you out of trouble. Be good – stay scared.

Q-vo Beat!

Yo aqui nomas(I'm just here) thinking about where they gonna send me. Hopefully my PO and the Judge decide to give me one more chance and send me to a group home.

I wanna go to a group home because at a group home they enroll you in school and I can get all my credits so when I graduate the program I'll walk out with a diploma so that's where I'm hoping the Judge and my PO decide to send me.

To all, alrato.

-Curious

From The Beat: Curious, sounds like you want to be productive, hopefully the judge and your PO have enough faith in you to give you one more chance. If you get this last chance, are you convinced yourself that you will be able to do what's right? Right meaning, following directions and going to school!

If I Can Do This Over

If I can do this over I would never come to jail. I would be with my girl, getting a fat ass house, a fat ass car on some 24s, have a job, be there for my family and girlfriend. I got money. I stay with a girl, stay blinged out from top to bottom. My girl stays blinged out from top to bottom. Ninjas stop hatin' and get your life together.

-Lil' Ronnie

From The Beat: It's not like you just "came" to jail. You made choices, and put yourself in situations to either commit a crime or look like you committed a crime. So take us back in time, before the moment when you entered the jail, and tell us the back story.

Death In The Streets

Rock bottom for me is when my uncle Way died and my Lil' homey Camron, my role model uncle Eric Alexander. All my family and friends who died in the streets of Richmond.

-David

From The Beat: It's not right that family and friends are dying on our streets. Tell us what you think about why this is happening. We want to know your perspective on how to stop the violence.

Why It's Hard to Get Out the Gang

This is Kazer, and I want to tell you a little sample of my life. It's messed up because when you try to be cool you always meet those rival people, and then you get into it. I know walking away would be the best, then they look at you weak, and then you gon' run in with him the other day.

The first thang he gon' think is whether to try to murder you, or he gon' keep jumping you until they kill you one day. Then that makes me go back to my old ways again, and then, if they started leaving you alone for a minute, they're coming back deeper than that. RiP Dash, Fredo, G Money . Love you all.

-Kazer

From The Beat: Good job breaking down those obstacles that make it so hard to leave the gang. Do you personally think it's impossible, or have you known people who did it? We know people who, with a lot of courage and some struggle, have walked away from their gangs, and gone on to take care of their families and get good jobs. Is this something you see as a possibility? Because those RIPs at the end of your piece tell the darkest part of the story....

Fear God and Myself

the only two things i fear is
god and myself
because it is hard out here
when you really don't know what way to go
to the mo' is all i know
so i really fear myself
just know how many people love me
and i be out there in the wind
doing all kind of sin
knowing that i can't win
but i also know if i ask god
he going to tell me what to do
but i fear telling the real
he know so
i just keep on going and going

-Choyce

From The Beat: It may be hard to forgive yourself when you tell yourself the real, but that's the real deal — to feel that sting of remorse as hot as a bullet wound in your flesh. It's something to fear, but only remorse and repentance will raise your spirit above the despair in here and your life above the temptations of the street. Washed clean of sin, you are free to begin (again) to be who both God and you always wanted Travis to be and to do.

Chucky Doll

When I was about seven years old, I feared the Chucky doll. I used to watch that movie all the time, and then I wouldn't be able to go to sleep.

-Kudah

From The Beat: That's scary stuff, as any little youngster knows!

What I Want To Do Over

I want to do over when I was on the street, my cousin had a gun and the police was coming and he dropped it and the police got me instead of my cousin. And the reason why I didn't snitch was because he had a warrant.

-Abo

From The Beat: Snitching is so complicated. You take the fall for someone else to protect him, but then you put yourself in great danger of the jail cycle, unable to get off probation and facing time while he's free. Or, you let that person fall and feel unable to enjoy your freedom. There's no right answer. But tell us more about your choice not to snitch, and what's in it for you.

Cridy Bo Do — Over

What is is Beat? This Lil' Jb. If I could have a do over I would do over Cridy Bo's life. My ninja should've not got killed. I wish I could do over his life. RIP Cridy Bo. I miss you. See you when I get there.

-Lil' Jb

From The Beat: Don't be in a rush to get there, because with the poetry you write, we need you here. The biggest thing you can do for your fallen friend is give him the honor of being the END of a cycle, not the beginning of one.

Family

If you ask me what I'm most afraid of — all my life I have feared one thing the most and that is to lose my family, either if I moved far away or even if they were to die (leave). As long as I have my family, everything will go perfectly. So, respect your family.

-Brah Dummy

From The Beat: Do you count being incarcerated as "moving away" from your family? If so, then you need to make changes in your life (like how you make your pay), to insure that you won't keep coming back to lock up (moving from juvenile to adult facilities as you grow older).

My World

My set goes hard 'cause we just have fun and be with our family. But when it's time to get down we get down. But me, I like to go stupid and go dumb to E-40 and Mr. Fab. And I like to go dumb to Droop E Beats. But my set likes to grind and get money and bust their guns. We go hard.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: Get beyond the lingo and tell us about yourself, and your relationships. Getting down and grinding is only a small part of who you are.

Time Keeps On Slippin'

What up, Beat! This Lil' Soldier and I just wanted to drop in and write a few lines in the Beat. Well, now I'm writing to you from a maximum security unit. I got moved from my other unit because system was hating on me.

They told their supervisor hella lies about me, so the supe' just transferred me out. I wasn't trippin' or nothing, but then I was — 'cause it messed me up my release to Camp! Last week me and two other homies were supposed to go up there. They took both of the other homies and left me behind! That was pretty messed up, but I'm not trippin 'cause they'll come get me soon.

I'm just tryin' to hit Camp so my time can start. I got to do a six-to-nine month program. I'm'a try and pimp my it, so I can get out and be with my older brother, Ruben. He just got out of New Folsom State Prison. I ain't seen him in two years, maybe more. I was waiting for him to get out for a long time, but I messed up and got caught up myself. Today is one month and three weeks that I've been locked down.

It's hella stressful bein' in here! Right now I'm doing coo' though; I'm just chillin' as we speak, just writing to The Beat. Well, it's 'bout that time I got to end my lines. I'll keep The Beat and The Beat readers updated on what's happening with me. Stay up to all doing time in the Pen'; RIP to all the fallen all around.

-Lil' Soldier

From The Beat: You're the younger brother of Febo aka Twilight? We remember him well, and we remember those last pieces he wrote us about how he ran from Camp so he could celebrate New Year's, then got high as a kite and was rolling in his father's car with a girl by his side when he got into a high speed and got away. When he said he was going to drive back across town in the same car to return it to his dad, the girl said he was crazy and would get caught for sure — and he did. He only had like a month or so to go at Camp and wound up going to prison because he wanted to party over New Year's. He warned all of our readers not to make the same foolish mistake he did — so when you go to Camp, no matter what, just do that good program. And when you see him, say hello from The Beat. We're glad he's free and we hope he's making better decisions for himself now that he's learned the hard way. Ask him to write a piece for us, an update.

Fear This!

I really don't know know what my fear is, but I'm tired of readin' The Beat Within, and seein' hella ninjas crying about how they want to change and shhh because they about to go to CYA.

Stop cryin', you know what you was gone face before you did the crime. So don't go and commit a crime and start cryin' when the judge bring up CYA. Ninjas be actin' hella hard when they wit' they squad, but when they get caught up they wanna cry and shhh. Do the time ninjas.

-Dedo

From The Beat: People love to say that: Do the crime, do the time. But we often wonder, whatever happened to "Just don't do the crime?" Plus we think the problem is the acting hard, not the tears that follow... wouldn't you want to cry if you found out you were going to have to face time? We hope you would, it seems like a pretty normal reaction!

When They Died I Hit Rock Bottom

Man I went rock bottom when Wax, Tay, Big Dootie, Auntie Caroiny, Biz Marc, Ready Rock, Rod, Sky Banga, Ray Diddy, Waga, JR died. Because they all were a part of me and now I feel lost with out them. But now I see they are in a better place and all I could do is cry and say RIP. And keep my head up and say see you when I get there.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: You've lost a lot of people, Lil' Tuttie. That is a long list. Take care of yourself. We mean be safe, but we also mean, take care of your grief. Take time for it, and thank you for writing.

Do Over My Eighth Year

I would like to "do over" the time I started to steal when I was 8 years old. Then I started to do it more and more 'cause I thought it was cool, but now I'm 15 years old and I'm in the hall now because I steal stuff that's not mine. Now I have to start my life over while I still can.

-Tub Dirty

From The Beat: To start your life over, you need to understand why you did what you did before, why you want to change and how to change. Start at the beginning and spell it out for us – why did stealing become such a big part of your life?

Dogs I Feared

When I was younger I used to be scared of big dogs. I was scared of walking sticks.

-Abo

From The Beat: What was it about walking sticks? The sound they make on the ground, the sign of age – or did someone hurt you with one? So, do you like dogs now or are they still a problem?

My Do Over

If it was a do over in real life I would bring back all the dead people who I loved. If it was a do over I would go back and don't do what I did to get in here.

-Ty

From The Beat: If only we COULD do it over. But lucky for you, in the future you can make new decisions. You can do it differently next time you're in a similar situation. You feel powerless in the hall, but you are a smart young man with the power to make new choices.

Beat Topics Answered

Do Over- honesty I wouldn't change any decision I made because I feel like everything I went through made me who I am today

Rock Bottom- I hit rock bottom too many times but it's always good to realize where you're at and know there's no where else to go but up. I also like to think of it as God is just testing you putting you through all these test to see if you pass or not.

Fear- My biggest fear and my only fear is to be alone, but the truth is everyone is alone in this world.

-Cathy

From The Beat: We'll respond one at a time. 1. Do-overs: We think that is a wise and mature position to take. What makes the most sense about it, is that you don't need to do-over your past, you can just make the right choices for the present. 2. Rock Bottom: For someone who has hit rock bottom many times, you have a very positive attitude. We hope and believe this will carry you through, until you don't have any bottoms any more. Only ups! 3. Biggest Fear: Everyone is not alone in this world! And we are so sorry that you feel that you are. Whose life do you affect? Who loves you? Whose life is richer because you are in it? If you can name a single person, then you are not alone.

What To Do

What's up with you! This Lil' Krazy (from Hayward) dropping a couple liñas from this weak max unit. Well, as for me, I'm cool just marinatin', doing my time, watchin' days slip by. Still waiting to go to court and get released to the "streets" on August twenty-fourth.

I really don't got nothing to say but what's up to all in this place. Man, it's hella boring up in here right now. Well, I'm about to end this in a full fashion with respect to all. I'm out. Alrato.

-Lil' Krazy

From The Beat: When you didn't know if you'd get out, you had a lot to say. Now you know, and you should have so much to say about your plans, prospects, promises to yourself, temptations to mess up, and how to do things differently — and you're silent.

Sparkt

I'm Sparkt
In the morning
As I can't walk
For the dark to hit
As I do what I can
To make myself settled
From the outskirt of my apartment
Although sometimes
I can be a smart for it,
But I'm too lazy to show it
But soon I will be published, ninja
So I won't allow no B-S
So please, hush, be quite
And close your eyes
To reverse
In the back of your brain
And pray
That they sit back and crystalize
As you try to lay back
And count all the clouds that
Float above you head
As I wish that I hadn't
Has caused more dead patients
Than HIV patients
And that beezy
Had that disease.

-Nyero

From The Beat: Interesting flow! Not sure what you are saying, break it down for us next time.

Tomorrow Ain't Promised to Nobody

It's so hard living this life each and every day. You got to be dedicated to this life. I take things day by day and do it big each and every day, cause tomorrow ain't promised to nobody. I can't forget about my brother Marcellus Haley.

I got eight days left, 'bout time this come out. I'll be gone, but just know that Lil Booda love's y'all and is waitin' for y'all to come on home. Rest in Peace Marcellus Haley

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: Truer words were never spoken. They say we should live each day as if it might be our last. If you know you only had one day left, how would you want to live it?

Life Is Hard

Life is hard,
It's like your playing a game with no cards
It's like were so young
We just got to bite our tongue all of us missin' our mamma's
Bein' in these unit's make us go through drama
Don't' you wish you can go back to get back up and try
Or you just feel so depressed you wanna die
Shed all of those tears and cry
it's really hard
For you, me, you're not the only one, 'cause so am I
There is one thing in this world that you can
Try to do but can't and that's a lie!
Life is hard
It's like your playing a game with no cards
Think about it, take a second.

-Tabatha

From The Beat: It's true, life can be really hard. Unfairly so for many of you youngsters in the hall. But one of the dangers that you all sometimes fall into, and forgive us if this doesn't apply to you, is thinking it really is a game and that the consequences aren't real. But they are so real. When you go to jail - it's real, when you go to CYA - it's real, when someone you know gets shot - it's real, when someone you love is an addict - it's real. The problem is figuring out how to make your life real in a positive way. We know this isn't easy.

My First Arrest Equaled Rock Bottom

I felt like I hit rock bottom when I first got arrested by the police. As I was grown up I did a lot of bad thangs and never got caught. I use to tell my friends I was never gon' get caught, but one night it happened, and now I'm probably on my way to Camp.

I just hope I learn from my mistakes and never come back. If I can stop, I will not come back.

-Lil' Phats

From The Beat: Well, Lil' Phats, you've just layed out the recipe to say out of the Hall. Will you learn from your mistakes?

Judgement Day

9-Vo Beat this yo' boy Lil Spooks, once again writing y'all from behind these walls. Well I'm writing about how I have court on Friday July 21, 06 and that's the day I find out what is gonna happen to me. As for me, I'm hoping for the best but expecting the worst, because I was recommended for CYA. But the only thing that can help me is God.

But hey that's the life I'm living and there ain't no turning back. Where I'm from, we play for keeps. But otha than that, I hope that it goes good for me, because if it doesn't, it's on and a crackin' for me. Otha than that, I'm a just stand tall through it all. And to all locked up, keep your heads up. Like that firme oldies goes "Don't let no one get you down." Alratos.

-Spooks

From The Beat: "Playing for keeps" "No turning back" ... those are all tough sounding words, but what they mean is leaving babies, mothers, girlfriends, brothers, loved ones behind. We know from your own piece last week that your thougths on this issue are much more complex than that. You don't have to go down that dead end street if you don't want to. What would your Better Self say?

A Big Do Over

See I'll need a do over, not my looks but my life, you know not like that, but al the bad, you feel me? I'll take out all the bad in my life, because I been through it all. I'll bring all my ninja back, and my dad. That will be a big do-over.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: So your two big do-overs were to save your loved ones. That's exactly the kind of heart we'd expect from you... you can't bring them back, but what can you do for your loved ones that are still here? What do you think they most want for you/from you?

Is This Really The Reason?

You just told me you have feelings for me
But before it was the opposite that came out your mouth
They say actions speak louder than words
Well why were your actions in such a loving way
But the words out your mouth damn near always run me away
Is this really the reason I shouldn't be with you?
Well your on my mind each and every day
Even you in all types of negative ways
I cry then it quickly goes away
The thoughts of you kissing even hugging me
Make my day a lot more bearable
But is that really the reason or should I say are those some memories that I'm really thinking down inside
the answers always point to no
but ooh boy how much I love you so
and you know and I know you got love for me too
only thing is you say 'cauyse you're a dude it's hard
for you to let your feelings show.
Well I let mines so please don't let that be the reason
Because if you keep doing the little things you
Do this time I wont come back when I leave and
Pack my bags and head out that "DOOR"...
So now ask me a question because I think I just found my reason

-Juicey

From The Beat: Actions may speak louder than words, but words have a lot of power too. For your own sanity, make sure you're getting both in a way that gives you confidence in the relationship.

This Fear I Have

Everytime I'm in somebody house digging through their personal stuff to find some money or jewelry what I fear is what if somebody comes home with a gun and I'm in their house. That is what I'm afraid of, but if you're from where I'm from, a ghetto neighborhood you just can't stop the crime your doing.

-Mien

From The Beat: We want to challenge you, Mien, because you might feel like you can't stop the crimes you do, but it's just not true. Not everyone from the ghetto steals and commits crimes. Maybe your real fear is that if you do stop doing crimes, you might have to do something harder: like go to school, get a job and tune out all the haters who want to keep you down. Committing crimes is a sure way to guarantee you'll never get out of the ghetto. Stop violating others and the system will stop violating you

Not Do My Crime Over

The time in my life I would do over is breaking into a house. It landed me on my first trip to the hall. If I was able to do that over, me and my dude would both be out kicking it together instead we're together in juvenile hall.

-Deja

From The Beat: How do you know you wouldn't have done something else to get you thrown in jail? If you had said, I wish I never broke into that house because it was the wrong thing to do, or I shouldn't have broken into that house because I'm better than that, maybe we could buy your story.

Rock Bottom Is Right Here

My rock bottom is being here. I can't stand not being able to do what I want, but in here is like the worst place you could be. I have to ask to go to the bathroom.

-Lil' Mel

From The Beat: You know what this means? Let this be your TRUE rock bottom, which means that from here you go all the way up. Let this be the worst part of your life... and let it never happen again.

A Bad Do Over

What I want to do over is what got me here like broke in to that gas station a different way.

-Mien

From The Beat: Do you ever think about not breaking into the gas station, instead of just thinking about how you could have done it differently? Don't be a fool, fool!

Do School Over

I would turn my life around I would go back to school and go get a job instead of staying on the block selling drugs.

-Flower

From The Beat: It's not too late is it? You have to want it first to make it happen. That's the first step in the battle and it sounds like you know what you want.

Living In the Hood

i been living in the hood
all my life
i saw homeboys
get shot and killed
but i know that's not
the way to live
i been on the block
doing my thang
thinking i would never
get caught up in the game
one day
someone told on me
and that just woke up game
for i been at camp
going on five months
but this thang is easy
but when i get out
you gonna see me

-D-Nuts

From The Beat: Forget the ones who might see you in the street, and get yourself some kind of a legal j-o-b. 'Cause making money in the street will knock you off your feet and put you underground or have you wearing chains below your knees wearing a steady frown. So we hope your game woke up to where you and the street broke up for good, so you can live and not die in the hood.

Loved Ones

This is to all my big homies and my auntie who died. You know your boy Lil' Tuttie miss all of ya'll and I wish I could be with ya'll. But I can't. All I can do is keep my head up and say RIP to the ones we love.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: Yes, keep your head up. But also, think about what you can do to prevent more deaths!

Don't Give Up on Me

What's up, this is Chaka from Hawyard, CA. I will like to tell my mom and girlfriend that I'm sorry for not caring about myself and them that I still love them, and no matter what , not to give up on me. Much love and respect to family.

-Chaka

From The Beat: The two different directions you seem to be pulled in show up loud and strong in this piece. On the one hand, you're swearing allegiance to a gang lifestyle, which we cut out, that is why you ended up hurting in the first place, but then you ask you family and girl to stick with you, and you're sorry. But do you plan on changing, or just putting them through more of the pain that goes with loving someone bent on hurting himself? It seems like a conflict of two opposing ideas... do you feel that conflict too?

I've Hit Rock Bottom

Right now I've hit rock bottom, I feel that now I'm at my final point because I'm tired of coming here and with the judges. I'm down to my last straw. If I don't finish this program then I'm going to the Y for four years. I know that I've hit rock bottom and is ready to change because I haven't caught a case in a year and I almost finished my group home placement but I made a dumb ass decision and messed up, but it's cool because I'm about to go do this 90 days placement and be through with this shhh.

-Iyshawn

From The Beat: Be very, very careful that you don't screw this up Iyshawn. If you go the Y for four years, it's going to be very hard to get back on your feet. It seems hard now, and we know that it is, but the Y is a whole other game that you don't want to play. We've seen how hard it is for young people to reintegrate when they get out of CYA. Do your program, keep your head down, and then use those four years to get an education, some job training, anything positive that will take you in the direction you need to go so that you're not looking down the barrel of hard time.

RIP Nitro and Rell

What's good wit' The Beat? This that young dunny up here at Camp. Shh gettin' crazy! I lost ma bra Rell, and ma cousin Marcus ("Nitro"). And it seem like it ain't gon' stop, 'cause that what it about when you with tha shh. Me and ma goons we out here from the flats to the jets.

Man, keep ya head up. We gon' be out in a few. Real talk. Get wit' the movement.

- Jerm

From The Beat: The movement to get with, is away from selling "shhh" that will get you killed at a young age! Do you want to see more of your friends and family die like Rell and Marcus? It's not just "the way it is" — it's the choices you're making that feeds the streets' omnivorous appetite not just for drugs but murder. Goons, toons or loons, get schooled and get a legal job soon. Or else! RIP Marcus and Rell.

I Fear

I fear that death is near
I fear that it's almost time to die
I fear that ninjas won't stop telling lies
I fear that this shhh
Is over
Ninjas getting lucky like a four leaf clover
Ninjas better get rich or die tryin'
Stop trying to take a 50/50 chance

-D-Bo

From The Beat: You'll notice that this poem is half the length of what you originally wrote. It's because we took out the b-s talk. If you stay committed to violence, and this stupid life on the street (get rich? Please – on the streets you're fighing over crumbs while the fat cats in offices feast in luxury), then you'll just end up back here, suffering like you are now. Is that really what you want? You know we respect your writing skills, now we hope you add in some life skills. You're too good for this BS.

Cocaine Bottom

There was a point in my life where i hit rock bottom. It was when I was strung out on cocaine. I was doing everything from snorting lines to smoking it in my blunts.

It had me goin' out of my mind, doing things I regret and turning people against me because I would go bad on them if I was under the influence. It had me losin' weight in my face and my body. It had me doing crazy shhh and not sleepin' at night and having crazy dreams.

-Laroo

From The Beat: Here's the craziest part: it will continue to pull you back, in your dreams, sleeping and awake. Cocaine stimulates the "pleasure" part of the brain, so that even when you know there's nothing pleasurable in the experience — in fact, it put you in hell on earth! — your brain gets tricked (physiologically) into thinking you want to do it again. So you must remain vigilant. 'Cause now you know where it goes!

Beware

In my future, I foresee money. When I get out, I see how much time I been wasting, playing. But the playing stopped, and my squad is about getting paid always ready to spay. I foresee spending time with my real ninjas and family. I'm going to enjoy life like I want. This was a message to let y'all know I'm stepping up, so beware.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: You know, in your other piece you wrote that tomorrow isn't promised to anybody, but then you talk all this talk about always being ready to spray. Life is a gift, and it's sacred, but then the way you write in this piece, you sound like you would be willing to put your life and other people's lives in jeopardy. Do you really value that sacred gift so little?

Back At Camp Sweeney

This Lil' Bill from Oakland. I'm up here at Camp Sweeney, goin' through it. My cousin just died — RIP Emmet. That's my brah, I miss 'im. I'll see you when I see you. Yo' family miss you, and we want you back!

All the boys poppin' bottles and goin' dumb for you. We givin' yo' family money so they can get through the struggle. That's it. One love.

-Lil' Bill

From The Beat: It's cool to give money to the grieving family. Funerals alone cost a lot of money. But there would be more young people still living, if it wasn't G-money y'all are out there making and giving. RIP Emmet.

Rock Bottom

See if you in the game, you know what rock bottom is, if you don't then you not that deep in the game. See like I told y'all before I been there. When times were good deepin the game, I been there when you have nothing to show for hard work you put in , and that's rock bottom.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: We feel you, and we now you've been through hard times, ugly times. But you know what, we think that there's a lot further to fall... one thing that shows in all your writing, and in your face at workshop, is Hope. You are still young, you are thoughtful, you are dedicated (when was the last time you didn't have at least two pieces ready for The Beat? NEVER. And what happened when we asked you to step up and right one long piece? You rose to the challenge and came through on your promise) – and you haven't yet hit the real ugliness of the adult system... In other words, you're still, even with all the pain you've been through, in a position where you can turn it all around if you want to. Of course, the question is, do you want to?

Feelings For Each Other

My girl is the most important thing to me, because we been together for a year and we always go to the movies every time together. That's why she is the only one closest to me because we really got feelings for each other.

I met her at school and I was going to football practice and I saw her standing by the face so I start talking to her, and then I got her number, and I ran down to the football field to practice, and ever since we been together.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: This is good. Love and support are what we need to make those big changes in our lives. Would you say your girl is a positive influence for you? And would you say you're a positive influence for her?

Fear the Street

To all that do fear I know y'all fake. It's always something in life that people fear, but want to day don't fear me or the street. Fear the life you live cause it's going to have you dead or in jail, know that. So if you don't fear nothing , fear this.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: We know we fear it. As much as we know you all hate being locked up, at least there you're safe from the streets... No matter how hard people talk in the Hall, we know that they are scared of what's out there. And they should be. There is not a war happening on American soil, but on some blocks it still feels like a war, and it's killing people, and worse – it's a war being fought for no reason. You've written a lot on this topic, what do you, Baby Lou, see as the

No Do-Over For Me

They say will I start over.
I'm a tell ya like this:
I wouldn't start over feel me?
I think everything I did it would have happened anyway.
Plus you ran from your mistakes
I'm a G so I wouldn't start over.
Feel me?
I wouldn't start over, 'cause what I did was for a reason.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: We have to hand it to you, young Suave. You don't BS, and you never tell us what you think we want to hear. That's an admirable trait. But we frankly don't give a crap if you're a G – what we want is to see you live to be a man. Not just a man, but a man who is living up to his possibilities. You have smarts, you have talent, you have dreams of playing football. The past is the past and can't be changed, but you have some hard choices to make about the future, and no matter how much street talk you talk, we know that deep down there is a side of you that wants much, much more than that. It shows in your eyes, it shows in your reading, it shows through even when you're cracking jokes. So what's it going to be? Are you going to be G? Or a man?

Do Over

If I could do over,
I would do over a lot.
I would do over
when I got caught wit' crack and got charged with sales.
I would do over the situation I put my mom, dad, and sister through I would change all that.
I would do over when my brother went to the pen for bank roberry.
I would have did something with him that day,
so he wouldn't have been wit' them ninjas he was with.
I would change a lot

-Roland

From The Beat: We may not always get to "do over" everything we regret, but we certainly can learn from our mistakes, so that we don't make more in the future.

Do Over: Send Me Home!

If I was able to get a do-over I would have used it right now, because I have really messed up right now.

Because I want to go home and see my parents. It's very stressful being in here and not knowing when you are going home. I would have do-overs when I got caught and would have been in Oakland having fun, and hitting the streets, going dumb right now with some females, and seeing my family. But instead I'm locked up and hoping for a release to go home. So if I was able to get a do-over that's what I would do.

-Andrew

From The Beat: The thing about a do-over is that it doesn't work unless you do something different. You want to go home, but then if going home just means hitting the streets and going dumb, isn't that what got you locked up in the first place? Write again and let us know if we're reading this wrong.

The Midgets

When I was younger I was afraid of midgets, foil and yarn. The only thing that I'm still afraid of is midgets. I don't know why I have the fear but I just do.

-A Young Giant

From The Beat: That is the funniest list of things we've heard someone being afraid of. We suppose there is really no logic to these sorts of phobias. But try to be fair to the little people!

My First Do Over

If I could make some do overs the first one I would make is 2/16/06 the day my bra Cell died. I would like to go back to that day when I was at camp so I could run and just be there wit' him and probably prevent it. We love you bra RIP Cell.

-Lil' Naudie Bo

From The Beat: How painful it must be to think about that every day...replaying the scenarios of you being able to stop a young man's death. We hope that it inspires you to stay free when you get out.

Hard

hard ninjas get shot
real ninjas get down

-Lil' Toto

From The Beat: "Real" ninjas get locked down, leaving their children with no father around to teach — don't believe slogans in the street disguised as wisdom, filling the vacuum left by fathers in the "correctional" system.

Stress Off My Back

Man, Why the DA and the judge wanna go and do that, puttin' shhh on me, like I really did that? Now they're talkin' about chargin' me as an adult, and I'm fighting for release, tryin' to get this stress off my back.

You know I told my mama I will never steal again, I'll probably still pop pills, sippin' bo an' drinkin' heem.

when I was 15
I had everything
I had G's in my pocket every day
a Ninja blunted, don't think a ninja stunnin'
'cause I live that way...
Cause I live that life
that's why one day I'm gonna be filled with ice.
I hope I make it, befo' y'all take it.

-Bart

From The Beat: We know that week after week we pull your pieces for their negativity, and we know that's hard for you ... but each week you try again, and that shows heart. In this piece, which started out as just you talking about the stress of your case, you switched midway through to the rhythms of rap. You know why? Because you have a poetic gift, Bart. You think in rhymes, and beats, choruses and stanzas, bringing music and words together in everything you write. This is a great thing, you should be proud of the talent you show. The reason we push you so hard is that we want to see you take that gift, that talent, and turn it to something that can work for you, not against you. When you write about guns, drugs, shooting, threatening people, you're hurting yourself, your mom, your community.... We think your gift (like your life) is too precious to waste on that. Keep your rhythms flowing, but let them be the rhythm of life, not death! Peace.

Rep

the streets
is what i rep

-Lil' Toto

From The Beat: You can rep' the street in the system, or rep' yourself in freedom. It's your choice.

I would do over the situation I put my mom, dad, and sister through I would change all that.

VOICES IN SPANISH

Corri Por Que Mucho Hablaban

What's up? Que tranzas. Soy Chakas de Hayward. Llebo desde el otro año que no he venido a la juvenile. Dure un tiempo afuera haciendo un desmadre. Todo este tiempo estuve en Nevada. Corri porque hay mucha gente que habla y habla. Me aburri y me fui. Agarre otros cargos y voy a ir a corte para el 17 de este mes. Para Noviembre voy a tener 18 años y no sé si el juez me va a dejar ir. Quiero decirle a mi jefa y a mi jaina que me perdone por no hacerles caso. Ojala que me calme porque he herido a mucha gente.

From The Beat: Antes que lo pierdas todo, todo, todo, deberías de calmarte. No queremos hacerte sentir mal con nuestras palabras, pero hemos observado que no has estado haciendo lo que te corresponde. La gente que esta afuera son los que quieren lo mejor para ti. Si ellos te dicen que termines tu programa, tienes que hacerlo. Escucha a la gente que te ama y quiere tu presencia en casa. No te fijes en lo que los demás dicen o hagan. Haz lo tuyo y vuelve a casa.

I Ran Because They Talked Too Much

What's up? What's the deal? I'm Chakas from Hayward. It's been a while, since last year that I have not been in Juvenile Hall. I lasted a good amount of time on the outs, doing a lot of mischievous things. All this time I was in Nevada. I ran because there's a lot of people that talk and talk. I got bored and I left. I got other charges and I going to go to court on the 17th of this month. In November, I am going to be 18 years old and I don't know if the judge is going to let me go. I want to tell my mother and my girlfriend to forgive me for not having listened to them. Hopefully I calm down because I have hurt a lot of people.

-Salas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Before you lose everything, everything, everything, you should calm down. We don't want to make you feel bad with our words, but we have observed that you have not been doing what corresponds to you. The people on the outs are the ones that want what's best for you. If they tell you to finish your program, you have to do it. Listen to the people that love you and want your presence at home. Don't worry about what others say or do. Do what you got to do and get back home.

¿Por Qué Lo Hice?

Hola, mi nombre es Carlos y soy de Honduras. Lo que les quiero hablar es acerca de la vida que llebo aqui encerrado. Aveces quisiera salir corriendo pero no puedo. Estoy encerrado y no puedo escapar, pero luego recapacito. Me pregunto a mís mismo "¿Para qué lo hicistes?" Aveces me reprocho a mí mismo por la vida que he llebado afuera, pero siempre le pido a Dios que me ayude.

From The Beat: Esta bien que te preguntes y te reproches las cosas que hicistes. Esto te va ayudar a refleccionar en las cosas que hicistes. ¿Que repuesta ha salido de tu mismas preguntas? Esperamos que sean positivas.

Why Did I Do It?

Hello, my name is Carlos and I am from Honduras. What I want to talk to y'all about is regarding the life that I lead in here. At times, I feel like running from this place, but I can't. I'm locked up and I cannot escape, but later on, I meditate. I ask myself, "Why did you do it?" Sometimes I criticize myself for the life I lead on the outs, but I always ask God to help me out.

-Carlos B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That's good that you question yourself and you criticize yourself for the things you did. This will help you reflect on the things you did. What answers have you come up with for your own questions? We hope they are positive ones.

Do Over

If there were do overs in real life, I would've used it when I got locked up in San Mateo County Juvenile Hall. I would've used the do over right before I ran from the police and the police dogs. Or what I could of did was just stayed in the house or took my dog for a walk. Or when I would've used it when I was 15 years old.

-Snoopy B1

From The Beat: Well, your response is real, Cordero. What happened to you, or what did you do that you regret, when you were fifteen? When you're free again, can you (will you) use the lessons you've already learned to do what is right for your future? That comes as close to a do over as we can get in this life.

The Longest Time

Man, I hit the bottom. It's the longest I been in here and times is hard. I'm having mixed emotions about going to Glenn Mills. Times is hard, my mom don't want to see me leave. All I can do is do my program. I got to keep my head up through the hard times. Things will get easier.

-Daddy Stoffice B2

From The Beat: No one every said life was easy. But it doesn't mean you can't make it easier on yourself. We hope you think about how you may be making your own life a lot harder by living the way you live — not to mention how you are making your mom hurt and cry. We hope that you benefit from the decent program that Glen Mills offers, and that you come back better prepared to help yourself and your mom. Good luck.

Busted In Juvy

It's your boy, Young Chuck. I'm in B1 an' I just got caught with a phone, me and D-Boom. But I been in the room for a few days. For my birthday, my mom came to see me but, man, that not nothing. Stay out of jail. Keep yo' head up.

-Young G B1

From The Beat: What do you mean "that not nothing" that your mom came to see you on your birthday? It sounds like something to us. It sounds like you owe her more than you're giving, meaning you're doing those things that put yourself in here and take you away from her. Is that fair to her?

The Night I Was So High

The night I was so high was when I was on the block all day in Oakland. Man, me and ma ninjas was getting high all day. Man, we had a scraper Lumina Chevrolet. Me and ma lil' patna, T, and his big sister drove. We went to the purple spot, bought a quarter of purple, and we had just got done smokin', like a quarter, and we bought some drank, some mata. We was hella high. Then we went to mess wit' some of ma ninjas, got high, faded the weed up, went back and parked. I was 'bout to get out the car and I fell on the ground and my patna had to take me in the house, I was so high. That's why I love my ninjas, because they always got ma back.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: Like little boys, you and your partners act without a thought to the consequences — which is one reason why you find yourself here! If your partners truly had your back, they wouldn't allow it to be put that back of yours in such a vulnerable position, they wouldn't allow you to paint a target on it! It's obvious by the choice of your Beat name and what you write about that you have smokin' on your mind. As long as that's all that's on your mind, the thing that is most important for keeping you safe and free — taking responsibility like an adult — will be that much harder to achieve.

Erasing That Thug Mentality

If I could get a do over, I would have used it when I moved to the suburbs. Why? Because once I moved I got dumb and started getting locked up for dumb-ass shhh! I lost my mentality to stay away from shhh dat would get me wrapped, because I stopped being smart in the 'hood way, though. I would do dumb shhh and not leave, so I would not get away with it. I would not think ahead of my crimes and how to get away safe. Or just not do something because I had that feeling.

Once I moved I lost that feeling. Now I just think it's bad when it is. I used to be able to be smart about what I do. But, really, if I wanted to prevent all of this, I would do over when I got that "Thug" mentality, because that's what makes all of us do all this shhh because we think we thugs and can't nothin' stop us. If we all took that away, we could be just like all those kids in the suburbs who know what bad is. We don't think shhh is bad, we know that this is our life and this is what we do, so that is what I think my do over would be.

-Michael B1

From The Beat: Don't fall into the trap of thinking that white kids in the suburbs don't do their own shhh. They do (and some end up going to prison for it). Which means that wherever you live, you have to rely on your own knowledge of right and wrong, and understand that everything we do in life has consequences. It's very clear from this piece that you are capable of thinking for yourself. But having the capacity to do something is not the same as doing it. You can't do it over, but you can do it right from this moment forward.

You Don't Know How It Feels

What do you know about being locked up? Have you ever been in a place where you cannot go home when you want to, eat or go to the bathroom when you get the urge to? How would you feel if you went to the halls because of one of yo' real ninjas played.

-Fat-Rat B2

From The Beat: Fat Rat, there are plenty of people that work at The Beat that have gone through the halls and some more. They all know how it feels to be incarcerated and to be away from those loves ones, to be told when to eat, take a dump, and even sleep. To wear others people's pants, shirts, shocks, and underwear. That's why The Beat does what we do, to try to prevent this from happening again to youngsters like you.

Scared To Die

I'm scared to die in life, especially in juvy. I don't want to be in juvy the rest of my life. The food is pretty nasty and I hope I don't come back here again.

-Fabules B1

From The Beat: Thinking about dying anywhere is scary for almost all of us, Fabules, because all of us will end there. It's how we get there that matters. What kind of life do you plan to lead from this moment forward so that it's life you get to think about, and not death?

Back In The Hall

I remember when I was little I was new to the game. Little did I know that things were starting to change — family were hating me, friends were being untrue to me. Then all of a sudden my life was threaten 'cause of my enemies. Then I started gang banging to show foo's not to mess with me, never run and hide because my enemies are after me. All I wanted was love and the homies started using me, but now I'm back in the Hall just for doing robbery.

(To be cont.)

-Puppet B2

From The Beat: When you say "just for doing a robbery," do you mean that robbing people is okay? Do you think this is the wrong consequence for robbery or that there should be no consequence at all? We wonder if there is a connection between your Beat name, and what you mean when you write, "...the homies started using me..." Is there more to this connection than you're willing to say? We await the next installment of your piece.

I Was Told Stories About Juvy

I feel I hit rock bottom when I came and got out of here. The first time I came here I was scared because I was told stories. So when I came to juvenile, in my head I ask for a do over.

-Deneal B1

From The Beat: How did the stories you heard compare to what it's really like for you in here, Deneal? Apparently juvy can't be too scary, or you wouldn't have messed up and come back a second time, right? All we can say is that if you don't change the things that bring you here, your real "rock bottom" is ahead of you. A word to the wise.

Never Hit Bottom

I never hit the bottom, to me. Yeah, I had bad times, real bad times. But not rock bottom. To me rock bottom is when you don't have anything not even a pot to piss in like people say.

Man, if I could do something over again, I would start way back to middle school and start from there 'cause after the 7th grade, it was all bad.

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: Why did things go bad after the 7th grade for you? Can you pinpoint specific things or people that turned your life in the wrong direction? It is never too late to go to school. Never. We know grandmothers who have gone back to high school to finish what they started. Are you as strong as those grandmothers? Your future depends on the education you get. Words to the wise...

Should Have Listen To Mom

The part of my life when I hit rock bottom is when I didn't listen to my mom... I wouldn't be in here. I been in here 76 days now. I swear to God it feel like I was in here for years.

-Brazil B2

From The Beat: Time in the hall goes by a lot slower if you are just sitting there and not doing anything. Try to make the best of your time by reading or exercising. We hope when you get out, you will listen to your mother next time and prevent this from happening again. It's funny how much smarter we can see our parents are from the vantage point of maturity.

One Again

I'm once again sitting in this place
All because I caught a new case
As I sit in my room I think about all the things I do
Never goin' to school always brakin' da rules
As the days goes by I try to
Ask myself why
Why do I do the things I do?
Is it just to get by
I just don't know I guess I'll
Just keep askin' why.

-Payaso B2

From The Beat: Asking why only helps if you're truly looking for answers — answers that lie within yourself. No one can tell you why you do the things you do but yourself. We think you already know the answers, it's just that you don't want to hear them. How many more times do you want to write: "I'm once again sitting in this place"?

Do Overs

One of my do overs is that I would try to do better in school because that's where I messed up at. Another do over for me would be a better way of me making my cash for real. Because right now the way I'm getting it is slow and too high risk.

-Hot-Rod B2

From The Beat: Was your problem in school doing the work, or just getting yourself there? If you need help with the work, it's available. If you need help getting there, it's up to you! The best way to make money is to give yourself the basic educational foundation you need to make a decent living, without risking life or freedom.

My First Day

Well my fear is that this my first day in YGC. Well, I feel like I am alone for like a few day or something like that. And it scared me but after a few day got used to it.

If I can do over again...Well, the first thing I do Is start over with school. I get my education I will get a good job,

-Simon B2

From The Beat: Simon, you can still start over by doing what you say: go back to school and get the education you need to stay out of places like this. The worst thing you can do is to get used to being here!

No!

Supp Beat? Man I ain't stop bangin'. I still am up in here holdin' it down for my 'hood doing what I got to do. Keepin' it g-code... Never been a sucka and I ain't planning on bein' one.

-Pappy Menace B2

From The Beat: It all depends on your definition of "sucka" doesn't it? How many times do you have to give your freedom up to a bunch of strangers before you qualify as a sucka? Well, however you define it, we will be seeing you again in the halls, and maybe we'll hear from you when you graduate to the much tougher, much meaner, much more slave-like conditions of those places the system has waiting for you down the line. The beast is reading this and licking its lips in anticipation!

Hitting Bottom

Being in here is the bottom to me. It's where you feel like you can't move nowhere emotionally. But I know it can get harder. That's why it's not the lowest point to me.

-DeAndre B4

From The Beat: From what we can tell from your continual attempts to name your turf in The Beat (including in this piece which we've had to cut some things out of for that reason), it appears you're probably right: You've got some more falling to do before you realize that there comes a time to take responsibility and grow up. We hope you don't have to fall much farther before that maturity comes to you.

Lonesome

When I was five, I was very alone. Well, at least that's what I was thinking. Every time I asked for help everybody had their heads to the ground. I try to keep my head on, but it's like trying to keep water in my hand.

-V-Time B4

From The Beat: Why is it so difficult to keep thinking straight? What derails you from the path you want to take?

About My Fight

I just don't know what to write
I guess ya want to know about my fight
I cannot tell you that because it was not right
Look where it got me because a weak-ass fight
That shhh is not right
I got to go so goodbye

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: Which part of this story "is not right" — is it the fight itself, or the consequences you're now having to suffer through, or both? Why do you get into fights? How is it that some people are able to find other ways than fighting to resolve differences? Can you?

Hope To Come Back To The Beat

I'm going out of home placement in a few weeks. Not sure where, but once I get out I'm going to get my permit to drive and then enroll to a school that can get me a lot of credit so I can catch up. Then in my spare time, I will try to get a job at the Beat again. Well peace out.

-Lil' E B2

From The Beat: Well, good luck Lil' E. The Beat will always welcome you with open arms.

It Ain't Easy

I think that the job life is important. But it is hard to get a job because I've been convicted. I think being convicted stops a lot of opportunities. But it stops the fast life I thought was the good life. It's only one thing to do. That is only get a job to support myself and family. Unless I want to walk dirty. And to know I worked hard about my own money.

-John B4

From The Beat: Getting a criminal record makes many things harder in this world, including getting a job. All we can tell you is not to give up. There are some job programs that are especially for people with records so they can get into the legitimate job market, and we hope you can take advantage of those programs. What kind of job would you like to do?

Doing Something Over

If I could do something over, I would never have ran away from home. I think it I never ran away I would not be in the system. But I wish I could go back and still have the knowledge I have now. The know I would be successful.

-Paradise B4

From The Beat: You can't change what's already happened, but you can use it to change what hasn't yet happened. In other words, now that you have the knowledge, what will prevent you from using it to become successful?

This Boy

This boy I know, it's like I think about him 24/7 all day every day. I can't get him off my mind. I can't wait till I leave YGC so me and him could hook up for my b-day and do big and the club. You feel what I say? Because it's like when I see him I just feel like I can talk to him. We come from the streets doing what we do to make it and it was love at first sight. That's what make him so great.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: We can feel your excitement, but please try and separate fantasy from reality. Focus on the things you need to focus on right now, which are your education and your future. The problem with "love at first sight" (especially for one as young as the two of you) is that it seldom lasts in second and third sight...

One Thing I Would Do Over

One thing I would definitely do over is the reason for me being locked up. First off I wouldn't been riding around with the people I was riding with, and when I first peeped out what was going on, I wish I would've eliminated myself from the crew.

If I would have known how many of my so-called friends got down, I wouldn't have been messing with them in the first place. If I could do over some things I will do over the females I run with 'cause they ain't cool at all.

-Ebony GU

From The Beat: So who would you hang out with? This question relates to when you get out, because at that point you have the ability to do things over, but only time will tell whether you'll be true to your wish or not. How will you avoid these girls you say aren't cool? Who will you hang out with when you get out? Second chances aren't promised to anyone, but you have a chance to change things in your life. Will you take it?

Hitting The Bottom

My point in life that I hit the bottom was when my mom died. I felt like it was my fault because out of all my family she was the only person that stuck with me, even if I was wrong, and I did not give her the respect she needed from me as her son. RIP Ma.

-Cuba B2

From The Beat: Losing your mother is one of the hardest things that any of us has to endure, so we feel the pain you're expressing. However, it's not your fault that your mother passed away. If you feel that you didn't give her the respect she deserved and that you didn't listen to her, now is the time to honor her memory by living up to what she saw in you and wanted from you. We bet your mother is watching you right now, still hoping you will make her proud. May her soul rest in peace.

If Only . . .

If I had do overs in real life I would have used it when the first time I got in trouble. If I would have used it I would have never came to the halls or ever be on probation, I wouldn't have been in B1, B2, B4 or B5. I would have stayed at school and never went to rob people and houses that day.

On that day, me and my cousin stole a car, robbed a house and a person, and at the end of the day I wish I wouldn't had did what I did. I wish I had a do over. But we wasn't even in the city, we was in the Tracy. Then we had to go to Stockton to the halls out there called French Camp. We stayed in there for three months then came to the city for a month then got out, I wish I had a do over!

-Cash B4

From The Beat: Of course, there are no true "do overs" Cash, as you know. But from what you've been writing, it seems like you are having some thinking "do overs" that will pay big dividends down the road. We hope we are right, because the life you've been living just keeps crashing into the dead-end of lock-ups and losses. You know what you need to do so that you won't be asking for do overs in the future. But knowing is not enough. You also have to be willing to sacrifice in the short term for that pay off in the long term. We hope you're ready.

Failure

One thing I fear is failure: failure f my program at ROP, failure
in school and failure at life.

-Smokey B4

From The Beat: Your fears are real, Smokey, but you hold the power to succeed. If you go to your ROP program believing you can succeed, then you're more than halfway there. And once you succeed there, other successes will follow. Good luck.

Back Again

If I could do something over I would change my first case and wish I stay out of the system. My first charge, and I got robbery along with some other five charges for my first time in YGC, and I did at least a month and a half. When I got out, I was on Probation for six months.

I told myself I was gonna get a job for one of my goals and so I did. An' I tried to see everybody that missed me. Barley two months passed, and now I'm in a car that was pulled over an' that police says that car license read that the car was a part of a robbery two nights before with a gun in the car. Now I'm back in YGC waiting...

-S B2

From The Beat: What happened Dot? You were doing good. From what we read, you achieved your goal and got a job. Did something happen that made you go back to the so-called homies that got you caught up in the first place? We hope you're not just waiting in YGC, but thinking about how to avoid ever having to come back again. The choices you make will determine that.

Do Overs

If I could do over what I did to be in jail, I would not have walked in the store to take all that stuff I took. I would go back and put it back where it belongs and just walk right out with nothing. If I could do over what I did, I would not run away from my group home for a year. I would not run. I would do good and go to school and get a job and be good.

-Very Nice Girl GU

From The Beat: Even though there are no "do overs" in real life, you DO have a second chance to go out in the world and do good. Are you really ready to do keep this promise? We know you have the intelligence, but do you have the self-discipline to go to school, get a job and do good? We hope so.

They would come there and mess with him; I never knew why, to this day.

It Would Be Nice

Yes, it would be nice if we could call do overs in real life. I wish I could call do overs in a whole lot of stuff, like this weak-ass boy I mess with. I really used to like him. One day he got shot and I heard it from a girl he was supposed to be messin' with. So my sister called and asked her a question about him getting shot. I guess the girl switched it up like I was the one calling her phone and I was some other shhh to him. And he asked me about it. I was hot. I couldn't even speak to him after he asked me about it.

Even if I did call asking the girl was he okay, how could he be upset? It's good though. He still my ninja. I still got love for him. But I do wish I could call do over when that happened. I would of never messed with him if I would have known he was gone call me with some weak shhh like that.

-Muck GU

From The Beat: It sounds to us that you haven't learned much from this experience. If a boy lies to you and cheats on you, why would you still mess with him? True loving relationships begin with self respect and self love. Don't let others, males or females, treat you with less than the respect you deserve.

Whose Side Am I On?

Sometimes I sit and look at life from a different angle don't know if I'm God's child or Satan's angel.

Reese-C-Cup B5

From The Beat: If God is the Creator, then we're all God's children, right? If you choose to do dirt, don't blame it on Satan, that's just too easy.

Goin' Stupid, Doodle, Dumb

Tell me when to go
Tell me when to go
Tell me when to go
Tell me when to go
Go dum dum dum dum dum dum dum dum
Jesus Christ had dreads, so shake 'em
I don't got none, but I plan on growin' some
Imagine all the Hebrews goin' dumb
Dancin' on top of chariots and turning tight ones
Tell me when to go
Go talkin' on my Getro
On my way to the sto'e
My second to third trip
Some Henny, OJ, and some Listerine strips

-Yung A B1

From The Beat: So then, do you imagine Jesus on top of a chariot shaking his dreads? Seems to us he was up to more serious business than that. Fun is fun, but all the Henny, OJ and Listerine strips in the world won't get you out of here. Maybe it's time to think about things. It's fine to have fun, but some fun and games have consequences we'd be willing to bet you're not ready to pay, so we hope going stupid doodle dumb is not all you do...

What I Feared And Fear

W'at up homies, como han estado? (How have you been?) This your homie, Mr.Goofy, from San Francisco once again.

Bueno. Dejenme comensar. (Okay, let me begin.) Today's topic is about your fear as a youngsta. Me as a youngsta, I used to be scared of being shot 'cause I thought that if you got shot you would die automatically. But as I grew up, that fear faded 'cause a lot of my homies have scars and are still standing tall and staying strong through it all. And that fear ended when I took six bullets and was walking the next day. The way I see it, if its not your day to go you can dam near take anything. Bullets, cars crashes, fires and all, all types of shhh. But if your time has come to bounce you can easily get taken out, que no?

My fear at this point is having my kids grow up like me. I will teach my kids the street smarts I know just in case they need them but I hope they don't go though what I been through. Well, times up for me. Keep trucha y al rato.

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: We've heard this theory often, that if it's not your time, you have nothing to worry about. But then, if that's true, you won't worry about your kids crossing the street without looking. You won't mind if they play where thugs are shooting. You won't mind if you put them in a car without strapping them in... Think about it, Goofy. If everything is already written, why try for (or to avoid) anything? Are you merely a passive leaf floating down the river of life till the end (which is already determined for you), or do you have some control over where your life leads? We think the notion that you're safe if "it's not your time" is nothing more than excuse to do what you want, and damn the consequences. We would think that the consequences you're now facing wouldn't give you much faith in that theory of life...

RIP To Junior

On April 1, my cousin died after a party. He really isn't my cousin, but I have known him half my life and I consider him my cousin. He died because after the party, him and his friends were playing around wit' somebody, and half of his body was inside the car and the guy drove off. I don't know w'at else happened. His name was Junior and he was only 18 years old.

When I first met him in Pittsburg, I was only seven years old. He knew my older brother, 'cause they were both in the same gang. When me and him first met, he was kind of mean, 'cause we just met, then we started talken. The next day we both played basketball and having fun. Then me and him started hanging wit' each other.

When I was wit' him and we went places. I thought I was invincible. A lot of times other people would come around and try to mess wit' him, but they couldn't, 'cause a gate was between us. They would come there and mess with him; I never knew why, to this day. If he wasn't around, they would just sit on their bikes and smoke a Black and Mild and cuss people out.

W'en I turned eight, my family moved to Martinez, but I moved back to my dad's in S.F. When I went to visit my mom, I was walking to the store and I saw my cousin there. I was twelve. We talked and that night I went wit' him and that night was the first time I smoked weed. I felt weird, 'cause it was my first time. The next morning when I woke up, I felt really high still, and I was really hungry.

After that, I went back to my dad's. I moved to mom's house and I began hanging out wit' Junior. Every time I was wit' him a lot and started smoking and drinking. After a while I started seeing him less and less.

It was like a year the next time I saw him. I was kicked out of school and went to a continuation school and he was there. We started kicking it again and I was doing drugs wit' him. After a while I went to juvy. I was transferred to YGC in my case.

When I got out I went straight to my mom's. When I got there I saw Junior and we started smoking. After that I didn't see him for a long time. After a while I saw him again. Then one April 1, 2006, I got a call from my friend and she said that Junior died. I didn't believe her, so I called my brother and he said that he did die. I started crying. I called my mom and told her, and then she cried also. Then I told my brother and he said that he just saw him. I still miss him to this day.

-Somebody B1

From The Beat: You tell a very sad story about your childhood friend. Despite the love you had for each other, you couldn't keep each other out of trouble and that trouble finally ended his life. What a terrible tragedy! Now that he's paid the highest price a human being can pay, will it cause you to live your life any differently so that those that love you don't have to mourn you as you mourn him?

Fear Of My Daddy

When I was little I used to fear my daddy 'cause if I did something wrong I would get in trouble. He would choke me out or he would slap me and he would leave bruises all over my body.

-Lil' Iysis GU

From The Beat: Your father did terrible things to you, and you deserved none of it. One of the things you should think about is how you plan to relate to your own children because patterns like the one your father demonstrated often get passed down through the generations (we bet he got hit by his daddy), and we know you don't want to be like that towards your future kids. We hope you continue to get the help you need to deal with the trauma you experienced as a child, Iysis.

This Is The Low Point

Man, I hit the bottom hella hard when I got locked up this time for this serious-ass case. I knew I was going down when I got arrested. I came to juvy and found out I got 17 counts, and out of the 17 counts 16 are felonies. That's why I just pray every night.

Then I just went to court July 14th and gotta go back October 18th. They tryna play ya boy, tryna charge me as an adult. But Bundy ain't goin' out like a sucka.

But, man, I hope everything go gravy man so I can get out this place, 'cause this shhh ain't coo' at all. So I hope all you ninjas that got them weak-ass cases knock that shhh out and stay out, 'cause life is too short and this system is playin' with your life.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: If you picked up 16 felonies, then it isn't the system that's "playin' with your life," it's you! Were you feeling like an adult when you did the things you did? Or were they the work of a child? We don't think the system should treat you like an adult, because we don't think you are an adult! But we think it's time for you to become one, which means stepping up to your own responsibility for the consequences you're now facing, and praying to God to get you out from under. Prayers go in two directions; have you been listening to what God is praying to you? If so, how will you answer?

At The Bottom

Yes I consider the bottom when me and play sis used to be on the outs and we would have to do anything to get some money because we both used to get into problems with my parents.

-Lil' Iysis GU

From The Beat: You are a very strong individual, Iysis. You have survived what no child should have to go through. How are you planning to get your money when you get back to freedom, so that you don't have to come to places like this?

I Was Scared Of The Toilet

When I was a young (boy,) I was scared of the toilet. When my mom closed the bathroom door and I heard her flush the toilet I was scared she would get sucked into the earth. I was scared to go to the toilet, too, 'cause I didn't want to get sucked into the earth.

-Sky High LCRS

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing and funny now to remember what life was like when you were young? Everything and everybody was bigger than you—dogs, people, sinks, bathtubs, and could threaten you whenever they wanted to, especially toilets. What other impressions of life did you have as a baby that you learned later were misconceptions?

At The Ranch

What's up to all I hope you're doing good. I am doing all right. Man, the Ranch is boring. I think I'm wasting my life away. I was supposed to go to a mechanical class during the summer.

Man, I thought I might see NGO here, but, oh, well. I wish him good luck and stay out of trouble, man. And I hope my boy in the pen is doing cool. Good luck in court. Hope I don't get 25 to life. Miss ya. Peace out.

-Wx LCRS

From The Beat: Welcome to the Ranch, Wx. You just missed NGO, who graduated from his program at the Ranch just as you were coming down. Now he works as an intern for The Beat Within and is doing well. We're proud of him. We will offer you a job, too, when you're free again, like we try to do for anyone from our workshops. Too bad about your missing your class in mechanics. That would have been a big help for you. If you're really looking at 25 to life in the pen, don't you think you should be grateful to be at the Ranch, which you've got to know is heaven compared to state prison? Handle your program and move up and out of the system!

Chinatown

I miss going there.
I wish I could get some of my favorite popcorn
chicken and a tapioca.
I miss green tea with milk.
I miss my freakin' mom.
I rather be in the halls than be at the Ranch.
I remember fighting so much at Chinatown.
I remember drinking a lot in the alley and just
kickin' it with my boys.
I can't wait to get these seven months at the Ranch
over with, and go to Chinatown
to get some Chinese food.
I don't know why people at the halls be lying about
the Ranch.
They be saying we get plugged when we get the
same food as the halls,
except we get a little more food.

-Wx LCRS

From The Beat: Chinatown really is wonderful, WX. So much history in your community. We bet you miss the finer things in life, especially mom. So what's the plan upon getting off the ranch? We hope you do more than just kick it at the ranch but strive towards bettering yourself now and when put on probation.

Doing My Life Over

I wish I could do my life over because I would want to change the way my life turns out. I made some mistakes that I made that I just cannot change. But I wish I could do my life over because I would finish high school and get my life back on track.

-Lil' Iysis GU

From The Beat: The bad news is that you've made mistakes that you can't undo. (And that's the bad news for everyone who's alive!) But the good news is that you can still do the things you wish you could do over. Since we know grandmothers who have gone back to high school to get their diplomas, there is plenty of time for you to finish high school and get your life on track. It's a question of following through on what you say you want to do, and not letting the past be an excuse to fall. You may fall more than once in your efforts, but if the efforts are sincere, you'll get back up and keep moving forward.

Love

The life I'm living is coming to an end because I'm locked up here without you. I'm in this damn cell sin ti (without you), waiting for the day I'll be next to you, mija. I want to kiss you and hug you. I can't stand it any more, sin ti. I feel like my heart is dying. I don't want to lose you, mi amor. Dedicated to Mitzy.

-Sp LCRS

From The Beat: You always write to and about your Mitzy, Slow Pain. You have a huge love for her. What's your plan upon getting out and not putting yourself and those who love you through anymore pain?

Tears

My tears fall in wide streams
Never relieved of them, not even in my
dreams
At night my pillows are stained
Even on my summer day it rained
When your smile filled my heart
That's when my tears began to start
When I realized you were the only one I
wish to hold
Then down my cheeks my tears rolled
One by one, two by two
The only one who can stop my tears is you

-April GU

From The Beat: This is a beautiful love poem, April. But we can't agree that this person is the only one who can stop your tears. It is only you who can stop your tears, and if you depend on someone else to do that — no matter how much you love him or her — you're bound to be disappointed.

Climbing Out

Rock bottom, rock bottom
That is where I'm at
Trapped inside a cell
No bail
Where I'm at
Looking towards life
But I hope I getta break
Lookin' towards prison
Five years is what I take
Rock bottom, rock bottom
Only for these days
I'm a climb to the top
And feel the sun's rays

-Lew Lew LCRS

From The Beat: Inspire to see beyond the system! Forget prison! Get to the top by getting yourself in school. Disciplining your self to succeed and be your own leader, you can do it! Seek help if need be. There's plenty of good people who would be happy to assist, you simply need to ask and make yourself available.

I Said Something I Regret

One day I said something I regret. My three cousins and I were in the car talking about our daddies and I accidentally told them he probably dead right now. I really regret that because the next day on Christmas he died.

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about your daddy. Of course, even though what you said makes you sad, they did not cause your father's death. No one has that kind of power (except God).

In My Dream

When I dream, I dream I'm with my girl, Angel Baby, and we be together--me, her and my baby, J.D., Juan Daniel. Don't wake me up, because my dream is so beautiful--a lot of love, happiness and to be with my family, seeing my baby grow, seeing him say his first word.

I want my baby to be a famous rapper. In my dream I pictured myself rapping, living in a mansion, and in my mansion, my mom and brothers and my family being happy. But when you wake up and boom, it's just a dream, but dreams come true if you work hard.

-A LCRS

From The Beat: that would be nice to have everything in place, family, home and all. As for your dream coming true, well why don't you work hard! Why don't you write those terrific raps, and become the most original and profound rapper you can be, A? Are you writing raps? What is your goal upon getting out of the system?

One Soul Mate For One Soul

Yo! Love
The realest love I ever felt
Smooth lips that were made for me
The only girl's lips to meet mines
The only lips that I want
The love of my life's lips
Are you still there?
You're not alone
But who are you with?
All of the doubt
The shhh that our love has outgrown
The plans for the future
The plan to escape
Our children
Our lives!
The big church wedding
The honeymoons
That shhh is insignificant, though
January 27th
I'm only here in the Ranch
To hurry up and return to you
But if I am wasting my time
Maybe I should leave from this place
Escape to New York
With a slice of pizza
From our favorite pizza spot
Is there another dude
You could imagine in a daydream?
Is it that easy?
These intense feelings
That I've never felt for another
Another man to drink tapioca drinks with you
You don't have two souls
So you can't have two soul mates, Love!
Are you still in love with me?
I'll see you soon, Love
I had to get that of my chest
Your mom told me that you still love me!
Chou!

-Biggie Littles LCRS

From The Beat: When you're incarcerated, it's easy to get nervous, worried and/or paranoid over the lives your lady, family, homies are enjoying without you on the outs, right, Biggie Littles? We here at The Beat wonder why many of you don't think about how hard it will be to be away from your loved ones before you risk your freedom. We just hope for you and everyone in juvy, that your relationships will still be there for you, supporting you and helping to make you happy when you get out. But, you're right, losing your loved ones is always a possibility when you get locked up and you're away from them for so long.

The Ghetto Struggle

The ghetto is struggle, so I got to make a change
You know it's hard on the streets so I got to maintain
Mom pulling on my sleeve telling me "Don't leave"
I'm like got to do what I do 'cause if I don't, I don't eat
Grew up with rats and the roaches.
Trying to stay focus, stay focused
Trying to survive in the world, but it's like I stay hopeless.
The world is ghetto and I can't escape that
Every time I try to prove 'em wrong you'll just prove 'em right
and I hate that
I know I've made some mistakes, black deep in the ghetto
Trying to find the queen, tryin' to avoid the rat 'hood
We're tryin' to make a change, an' in fact we should

-Barry B4

From The Beat: What kind of changes do you think you should be making? What's keeping you from making those changes? What kind of help do you need to succeed?

Undo My Tattoo

Let me tell y'all about my fake-ass jail tattoo. I was in class bored and I decided to make a tattoo with my eraser. I started to rub da eraser on my skin and made a j. That stuff hurt and I wish I didn't do, like rewind it to the part I was in class and started from there.

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: If class is boring to you, why disfigure your own body to pass the time? Why not find something you are interested in, and pursue it in books? Education is not a passive process where you wait for others to spoon feed you, but an active process where you feed your brain the nourishment it needs. You've probably heard many times that education is the way out and the ay up. Don't tattoo your skin, tattoo your brain with knowledge! ,

I love my life so much, but this moment is torment. Yet I feel no emotion.

Walkin' Down These Mean Streets

I fear walkin' down the street, but at the same time, I don't. the only time if I have fear when I am by myself when I am walking down certain streets, but if I am with my homeboys, I am cool 'cause if something goes down, they got my back.

It's easy staying in this hyphy city. You could get shot just for wearing a SF Giants hat. In my short young city life, a lot of people that I love. Lost most of them 'cause of gangs, but no one could do nothing about it.

-Lucio B4

From The City: What you wrote reminds us of Iraq where a full-scale war is underway. It is dangerous to walk down the street there, and it is dangerous to walk down the street here. And it is scandalous in both places. Those homeboys you rely on just can't have your back all the time, Lucio — and that's why you've lost a lot of friends. Why risk so much for so little?

Approximately

Distance is covered by positions and sight, so the overpower doesn't relate to us directly. Women stabbed and men grappled, unable to understand one another. But this would not be necessary. Watchers that watch the waiters that sit, comparing time zones and worlds, but not really caring of it. An unnecessary voice in the silence of patience that waits for the other. The recognition of memories that thrust us forward, but the vital is now, which never seems to be opened, opened…

Opened eyes are bright, taking it all in, details are perfect but confused of the meaning of this. The same color tells me it's helpful, but it also means hell. Words that express are my meaning of jail. Lost and helpless when 20 hands reach for me, telling me it's okay, but my mind screams! They think they know me and understand me so well, but even I can't understand what is in my face. Swirls, swirls, a magical land. It seems to exist… this very day. But tomorrow is now and my childhood also, now is now and we will forever live.

If anyone understands, it won't be me. I'll live like I want but hoping for the beyond the outer is what my mind sees it as. I'll never know, but I still run around this imaginary land. Thoughts and thoughts escaping the trap, the trap of forever lies beneath a pen and a pad.

Help me please! I don't like earth. Delusions and illusions mean the same, trapped forever in this terrible life game. I need what I want, so give it to me. pushing me more and my emotions just bleed. Sorrow and happy fill in the empty, but cars blow up and don't rely on envy. Wake me up please because I know it's a dream. From my blood and felt family to my knowledge and shhh. It all make4s sense, but you still have me guessing. I'll live in your world if you give me the dressing. Maybe you are and I don't even notice. But depression keeps me from out in the open.

No, no… that last sentence screamed. But please let me out of this life of weed and my thoughts… I do not like that ending, but to erase is forbidden. The past is precious, but the present is givin'. I want to scream, to scream, to break down and cry, to laugh so hard that I feel like a pretty young girl. I want to learn so much, but can never be focused or focused or focused. An error, but know, or no, the thought of an error leads to a true. But damn everyone, damn you, you and you… Me too, because I am a pathetic one too.

It is July the 12th of the year 2006. I want to remember everything so perfect. I miss my friends. I miss you, Rebecca, even though I barely know you. I'm sorry, but it's true. I have forgotten a lot but I'm able to remember my mind is my friend. But it won't leave me alone. I have a chance to know you, but mind will not let me. instead it reminds me of Jeff, near Marina, playing with the Frisbee. And yeah, you're cool and I miss you, but mind tells me he's all that I've got. This sounds so corny and cheesy and silly. I will only rhyme when my mind tells me not to, a rebellion that rebels against nothing to die.

He doesn't really care for the people that need. But he does or he thinks so, please come… I need to talk to you because I want and you will make me seem human. I love my life so much, but this moment is torment. Yet I feel no emotion. I am not accepting the taste of the milk. It's really, really cloudy out there right now. Maybe this is why I want out so much. I think not of the consequences: no one is out there except actors and tricked hostages. Any one of you smart muthas give me an answer, or I'll hang with mother and get to understand her better.

The life of a crack head seems so far away, but (depression, depression, I close my eyes). They open again and a mistake of this dream I'm livin'. As I will go to sleep tonight, I will not cry. I won't laugh. I won't get mad. I will think and think and try to escape, but superman and friends will break the silence, music, love, passion and hate… memories… my reveries will stray…

-Meen B4

From The Beat: We want to make three important points (important to us) right off, Meen. First, because of the way you write, we can't tell if this is meant to be a poem or not, so we just typed it out as if it were an essay. Second, because you are so eager to write without waiting for discussion (because YOUR subjects are infinitely more interesting to you than ours), your handwriting tends to get sloppy and difficult for us to read, and thus difficult for us to type. So we're asking you to take more time with your writing. And third, what you write about often makes little sense to us because it is all internal — your own thoughts about your own life without reference to others, as if you alone are in the universe. The problem with this is that it provides no insight or value to others reading it. It is you playing with your own thoughts and your own words (some of which come through loud and clear, like "Depression, depression" and "Help me please!"), but which require some explanation that can be understood by more than just you. In a way, as talented as you clearly are, this comes across as a kind of mental masturbation — it feels good to you while you're doing it, but it has no lasting effects for anyone else. But what does speak to us is a terrible loneliness, and a sense you have that you are an alien in this world, that nobody has gone through or is going through what you are, and that you desperately want to feel a part of the world, of the human race. All we can do, Meen, is to assure you that you are not alone; that you are not the first to have these thoughts; that you ARE human and need no one to confirm that fact! The depression you refer to is real, and real depression can be addressed by real people who have studied the human mind and have access to therapies and treatments that can help (though often do not). We hope you trust someone (beyond The Beat) to express these thoughts to, because we think opening up to some adults could help you feel your place in the world, even if that place is as a rebel, a revolutionary, a person outside the standard mold — because even rebels need friends, support, encouragement and love. It's there for you if you'll give yourself a chance. Finally, we urge you to remember that you don't know everything yet; you haven't experienced a great deal of life, so to draw conclusions (like "No one is out there except actors and tricked hostages") based on your limited knowledge of the world only limits you even more. To doubt, to wonder, to challenge, to scream, to see the hypocrisy, to recognize the power that liars and cheats wield over others — these are all ways to find your own truth, and we don't want to discourage that. But to draw ultimate conclusions based on limited experience, this is what we want to encourage you to avoid. Like all of us, you have much to learn, a process which never ends — except for those who think they already know everything…

It's Time To Go Home

Hey? What's up? This Lil' R. I just want to say what's up to all The Beat writers. I hope everyone is doing good, trying to get home to the ones you love. It's time to go home. Forget staying in jail. It ain't the way to live life. Well, got to go. Stay up, everybody. One love.

-Lil' R LCRS

From The Beat: How are you doing down there at the Ranch, Lil' R? When you're home again, what will you change so you won't get into any mess that will bring you back to the Ranch or worse? Gie us the details!

Free Me

What's up wit' it Beat? This yo' ninja Twon back on the tape. Ain't went nowhere yet. I'm going to a group home in two weeks. I just hope everything go right. They gone send yo' boy way to LA. Stay up.

-Lil' Twon B4

From The Beat: Is this the first time you've been to LA? What do you plan to do at the group home so that you don't have to come back to the hall?

My Childhood Fear

My childhood fear is getting shot or stabbed. The reason why because my cousin got shot, but he's still alive.

-Young Harley B4

From The Beat: How terrible that your cousin was shot, but we're glad that he's alive. How has this experience changed anything about the way you live?

Fear

When I was little I feared spiders, but I overcome them now because I am bigger than a spider. Also find out spiders are mostly harmless now.

-Kirby B5

From The Beat: Now that you're bigger, are there other things you fear — anything having to do with the life you lead?

I'm In The Party

Ya see, this is ya boy, T Money
It's ya boy, T Money
I got six bottles of Chris
I'm in the party
And whenever I'm in the party
You know I keep it crackin'
Whenever I go
From 'Frisco to Vallejo
Back to the O
From the O
Back to the Sco
As you know
Ya young boy got dough
And they don't call me T Money fo' nothin'
'Cause I keep the party
From 12:00 to 8:00 in the morning
And please believe
If I see your chick
She gonna be on me
'Cause ya young boy
Ridin' 24s
And every time your chick
Looks at my wrists
It's iced up
And I stay iced up
From my chain to my watch
To my ring
Back to the earrings
And don't be mad
'Cause I'm on top of the game
So don't be mad
Because I'm freshed to death

-T Money LCRS

From The Beat: That may have been you T, but take a look at yourself today! You can't afford to be out all night long partying. You need to handle your business especially if you want out of the system. Probation is no joke, 'cause if you're caught violating back to the hall you go. Find success in school and living legitly and in the end you will be feeling good about yourself.

People Getting Shot Over Shoes

Yo, this the Candy Man
And the Handy Dandy Man
All you young kids out there, mans
That's under seventeen
Get out the streets
'Cause them streets is hard
'Cause people gettin' shot over shoes
Or over a block
That the white man built here fo' us
Get out of that beef
'Cause when it get thick
It gonna get hectic
And when them shells hit you
You not gonna be ready
'Cause pressure bust pipes
So think twice about your life
'Cause we all remember
What happened on 9/11
So when them bullets hit you
You gonna fall down
Like the Twin Towers

-Candy Man LCRS

From The Beat: You're right, Candy Man. Every day, all over the Bay, young and old, who are on the streets are getting shot and are gone forever. Their family and friends grieve and really suffer. Why don't you write about the pressure your homies and you feel in the streets? How do you protect your precious life? Stay out of the streets? What else? How do or could you build a life for yourself out of the streets?

Forget It All

Forget college
Forget an "AA"
Forget a degree, period
All I want to do is get money, get females and smoke some weed
Big Philly
'Cause I don't like it skinny
Oh, yeah, I can't forget about
The fifth of Remy
Stay up, way up

-Birdman LCRS

From The Beat: Birdman once again making your mama proud. You a fool! What the hell are you trying to say in The Beat Within? That you do not amount to much? For your information, it's a lot easier to make real money with an education. The lifestyle you write about will haunt you in the end. What do you want your kids to say about their dad, when someone ask what your dad do for a living, they'll reply, "what dad? He a drunk. He high on dope, basically homeless, can't trust him."

I Will Never Start Selling Drugs

If I can do over, I will never start selling drugs.
I will never start being with ninja.
Never run away from home,
trying to be grown.
And look where I am. Not home,
'cause I did think of myself grown.
But I am all bones.
Why am I in here all alone?

-Shelly-M GU

From The Beat: Wishing you never did the things that got you here is only a useful exercise if it motivates you to change your future (since you can't do over the past) What would you have done if you had never started selling drugs? And what will you do once you get out of here? Because once you are out, that's the real test of whether you truly want a do over.

So think twice about your life
'Cause we all remember
What happened on 9/11

Lookin' At You From A Distance

What's up, girl?
How you doin'
It's ya boy, T Money
And I was lookin' at ya
From a distance
And, girl, you fine
I was laid back for a minute
And now it's time
That I make you mind
It started off
We was best friends
Next thing I know
You callin' me, "Baby"
And after that
I took you out on a date
To the movies
And then I brought you to the house
And let you meet moms
And next thing I know
We spendin' lots of time
And I'm glad that I made you mine
And we have to spend some more time
And I lay in bed
And think how it all started up
We was best friends
Then we became lovers
It was the summer
When we fell in love

-T Money LCRS

From The Beat: Romantic poems are nice and all, but next time we suggest you personally send it to your lady friend.

To Many Patnas Died In One Month

A time when I felt I hit rock bottom was when I was on the run and four of mah patnas got killed in one month. I felt like, "Damn! To hell wit' it!" I did some d umb shhh during that time I was on the run, shhh that's gone catch up wit' me eventually. I just wanna say RIP to all fallen souljas, and to my most recent partna, Squince.

-9-B B1

From The Beat: We are sorry about the terrible losses your partners have suffered — and the emotional losses you have taken along with them. But the truth is you are setting yourself up for a rock bottom you can't even imagine if you can't shake yourself out of the lifestyle and mindset that this heavily edited piece represents.

Being At A Group Home

Being at a group home ain't nothing nice'cause you got girls in there running they mouth but don't want to say it to yo' face. Then while you there, you want to be free, be with ya goons and do what you want.

But I tell them like this... I'm a big dog. I'm trying to go home and be on the block and make my way. Shhh is really crazy in a group home . I want to be on the block for I can hang out and do what I want to do. And get my education.

-Jenn GU

From The Beat: What kind of education do you want to get out there on the block? The kind that leaves you addicted? Or in prison? Or dead? It seems like you threw "get my education" in as an afterthought, when it should be your biggest motivation. Why don't you just give the group home a chance and not decide ahead of time that you aren't going to like it. Like an alcoholic who can only think about the next drink, you can only think about going back to the block. (We had to take out several of your references to which block you want to go back to...) It's controlling you rather than the other way around. You may be a "big dog," but someone else is telling you when to sit up and when to roll over... Sadly, unless you really get the education you need (in school, from books, and from as many different life experiences as you can gather, rather than the same one over and over), you'll just keep finding yourself being told what to do by bigger dogs than you.

It's A Jungle Around Here

I come from a small town called Marin City, where everybody goes stupid, dumb and hyphy, feel me? It's just the way of our culture. It will never change and it's rising day by day. And people from down south, Midwest, east coast, they all riding us out here. But remember, only the Bay can represent it. You already know this came from young Henny. Yee!!!

-Henny

From The Beat: Can you write The Beat about what the appeal of going dumb, stupid and hyphy is, Henny? We hear how proud you are of being from the Bay, especially Marin City, but you do not offer any support as to why your town is so special.

Time Capsule

If I were to build a time capsule, I would put my clothes--my white tee, my black Ben Davis all creased up, my white chucks. I would put an I-Pod full of all my favorite songs. I'll put a dollar bill. That's all I would put, so, peace.

-K-Nal

From The Beat: What songs are your favorities, K-Nal? In fifty years, and you're, say, sixty-five years old, how do you think you'll feel about the clothes you love today? When you're sixty-five, what will you put in your time capsule then, for your great grandchildren to find and enjoy and will teach them who you were?

Talking To My Inner Self

Sometimes when I really like some girl, I tell myself not to tell her, but the other side tells me to. But at the end, I make the wrong choice, no matter what I do.

-Dice

From The Beat: Most of us know the struggle you describe in your piece. As for making the wrong choice, well, eventually you will make the right choice, 'cause that happens too.

It Wasn't A Dream

Everything that I have gone through has been a dream--doing drugs, stealin', hurtin' people. But sadly to say, it wasn't a dream. All of it happened and that's what life brings you--hard times, happy times, sad times and good times. And I had a lot of good times, many sad times. Had a lot of bad times, but you gotta know there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

And for people that want to do something, just keep movin' on in a good way, and good things will happen. And if you think everything that you wish didn't happen and is a dream, don't worry--you wake up soon.

-David

From The Beat: Did you tell yourself that the things you were doing that hurt other people were vague, amorphous and unreal, like a dream, because you didn't want to take responsibility for them and you didn't want to stop? Since you really did know what you were doing was wounding others and very wrong, why didn't you stop yourself? What finally woke you up? Was it the system? A friend? What advice would you give others who are in a dream or nightmare maybe similar to yours?

Mixed Feelings Every Day

Mixed feelings every day
Biting my tongue, don't know what to say
Offering me fifteen years with a L
Every second's a living hell
On my way to the pen
Don't trust nobody, ain't got no friends
Ninjas on the stand, raisen they right hands
Caught up in the system, can't do what I want
thrity when I get out; man, that shhh is bunk

-Young Bud

From The Beat: There's no way we can know what has gone down with you, but from what you've written you are either looking at some incredibly difficult, essential choices, or you are just being creative and making shhh up. Regardless, best to you YB!

My Time Capsule

I would put pics of me and my family and me and my folks. I would put handcuffs to show the struggles I went through. I would put a CD in there with all my raps. A stack of money just stuff to show whoever found it how I live.

-Perry

From The Beat: What would the photos of your family and you show all of you doing? What CDs are your favorites, that you would include? Would you include a stack of money because you're proud of how you earned it, into your time capsule? How did you earn it? How do you live?

WALDEN HOUSE PSK

Have Nothin' To Fear

My fear is dying, only thing that
can have my heart beatin'
I can't be afraid of anything else
Shhh, being alive through this
drama
Is enough for my wealth
I been through hell 'n' back.
From rock bottom to feelin' so
Lonely at the top
Doin' it over and over again
'Till I can take anything like I'm
Superman
I have nothin' to fear.
That rock bottom doing it over
And over again, got me feelin'
This way, 'cause I am the future

-C-El-Smooth

From The Beat: How will your past help you form your future? When you say you are the future, what do you mean? Where will you be and what will you be doing in five years?

Denial

Don't
Even
Know
It's
All lies

-Kalisa

From The Beat: Oh come on. You can do better than this. Tell us something. Don't be so lazy.

My Fear

9-Vole Beat? Dis homegirl is doing great. Anyways, my fear is karma!

Well, let me tell you about my man. I used to play him and he used to be a pimp. He used to be a player. He said to me, "That all change when I got you." He was faithful. I loved him so bad. He wouldn't leave me, and remember dis, I was on drugs at the time.

Well, let me get to the point. I got locked up and I heard that he was messing around with two jainas behind my back! This all happens to me when I realize dat I have to get my stuff together and dat I really so love him. I had a feeling dat dis was going to happen, but it really hurts bad to know dat da one dat loved me before don't love me no more. I am feeling da hurt he was feeling. I wish dat I can take all dat away.

My other fear is my baby sister (Lil' One). Well, some day she'll get deeper into using drugs and treat me like how I treated her, like shhh. I am tryin' to get my life together before it's too late.

These are my fears (Karma). Well I've gotta go. dis homegirl is out. Alrato

-Smokey

From The Beat: Yes, karma can bite you when you least expect it. Even though we know you're feeling the pain of your boyfriend's betrayal, that doesn't trouble us nearly as much as your fear for you little sister, and how you treated her. (Boyfriends come and go; sisters are forever.) All we can say is now is the time to start piling up some positive contributions to those scales called karma, so that the good you do now comes back to your in the future. The best thing you can do for your sister is to get out of here and live the kind of life you'd like her to live. If she looks up to you (and she does), you will be doing a lot to undo the karma of the past. (Please stop writing numbers for words like "to" and "for"... We'll never put them in The Beat that way, so you're wasting your time and ours by writing that way...)

Well growing up in Richmond was a big struggle for me. While I was involved in drugs, stealing things, and prostituting. I lived at the part for three and half months.

Rock Bottom

Well growing up in Richmond was a big struggle for me. While I was involved in drugs, stealing things, and prostituting. I lived at the part for three and half months. I thought this was my rock bottom, but now I think back and it's not because that is nothing to me now. I ain't scared to sleep outside, steal, or prostitute. So my rock bottom would be death.

-Country Mouse

From The Beat: We wish you were afraid of some of what you say you're not afraid of, because there are consequences you apparently haven't thought about that may bring you lower than death itself. There's disease, there's crippling injuries that could leave you totally dependent on others to do for you, there's the loss of loved ones. We don't want to scare you (or maybe we do), but we want you to look at all the possible consequences of your choices, and be righteously afraid of what you should fear.

The Bottom

The time that I felt like I hit bottom was when I was in YGC for like about two months. I got out and came to this program Walden House, and the first step I took by the house made me want to run, go somewhere else. But what I was telling myself, I'm not ready. And the way I changed my decision was thinking about my life and for whoever doubted me. And that was my bottom.

-Jeannie

From The Beat: The one thing about hitting the bottom is that you have only way direction to go, and that's up. It sounds like that's the direction you are now traveling in, so all we can say is just keep moving.

WELCOME TO... THE BEAT WITHOUT

MONROE COUNTY JAIL

As the following description makes clear, these remarkable contributions come from young people in the Monroe County Jail (they have all been tried as adults) in upstate New York. Like all the best writing from Beat writers, these young people describe lives of desperation: the pain of jail — isolation and loneliness, the pain of hurting their families, the pain of absent or abusive fathers and mothers unable to provide, the pain of loss and the pain of feeling lost. This is our third and final installment until they send us some more. It's a pleasure to have been able to collaborate with such an inspiring group. Meeting Dale Davis, this past July, was an experience that The Beat will always remember. She's truly an angel and we look forward to future connections with her. The following paragraph describes the program:

The following pieces are from the Monroe County Jail in Rochester, New York. They are submitted by Dale Davis, Executive Director, The New York State Literary Center. The writing resulted from an Empire State Partnership, made possible by The New York State Council on The Arts, between The New York State Literary Center and the Rochester City School District's Youth and Justice Programs. The partnership is grateful to Dr. Manuel Rivera, Superintendent of Rochester City School District, for his commitment to diversity; C. Michael Robinson, Chief of Operations, Rochester City School District, for his pioneering foresight in education; Margaret Porter, Program Administrator, Rochester City School District's Youth and Justice Programs; Patrick M. O'Flynn, Monroe County Sheriff.

Jail

It is hard
knowing
the time you are going to serve
is time
from your life.

It is cold at night.

-Lavonne

Where Do I Fit In

I fit in on St. Paul and Norton
where everyone is family
and we feel each other's pain.

We are all family.

Everyone sells drugs.
We all know what it feels like to have money,
to lose somebody,
to be in jail.
We all have kids.
We all can't see where we are going in the future.

Sometimes
I feel like
I am staring down the barrel of a gun.

Truthfully
home is where I lay my head.
I know what it feels like to hurt.

-Alton

And Every Day

I am living my life in a cell,
and every day
I wonder when I will get out of jail.
I am in the Roc
living under a rock.

I know I can do better.
I am ready to explore the world.

I see myself on a quiet island,
somewhere far away from all the violence,
living a life full of peace
with love and clean streets,
somewhere
just watching the sky
where there is no need for a gun in your hand,
somewhere free.

It's not fair.
Does anybody care.
Nobody is here.
Will someone ever be near?
When will night become light?
When will wrong become right?
It's like every night it is a fight.

Right now it is so dark.
I feel torn apart.
I am so cold.
I need someone to hold.
I feel so alone.
I wish I could call someone,
but nobody I know accepts collect calls.

I know once I go I will never come back.
I continue to pray
this pain will go away.

I want to breathe the air.
I want to touch the leaves on trees.
I want to walk down the pier at the beach.
I want to feel the wind.

I want to start my life anew.
I have had enough of being here.
I feel like a bird trapped in a cage.
I just want to be free and fly away.

How long will this pain last?
Will it ever be in the past?
I don't know how long I can take this.
Every time I look around I see familiar faces.
I feel like Superman but cape less.
I have to hold on.
Please somebody pray for me.
I know I have a brain,
not using it led to this big change.
Now I am in chains
waiting for the Deps to call my name.
Please, please
how long will the pain remain.

Is life just a name
for what we're living in?
Is life just a place
of insults and many sins?

I'm curious to know why people don't take life seriously.
Too many people are selfish and refuse to share.
If people know about life,
why aren't we all living right?

Life, life is a beautiful thing
minus all the confusion and pain.

Look at this place where we're living
that is supposed to be so marvelous.
Look how we treat each other.
Sometimes I wonder
what is the explanation of life.
"This cold world" is not right.
Can somebody explain,
what about the pain.

How can people sit back and just relax
when our kind are dying.
Sooner or later we will all vanish.
This cold world is all I can say.
This world is colder than winter weather.
The ones who choose not to help are the victims.
Is there anybody who is willing to change?

Is crying a sign of weakness?
Some people cry and keep it a secret.
I believe it's okay for anybody to cry.
I cry tears of pain because I have been through so many terrible things.
I cry tears of pain
to release thoughts in my brain.
I cry tears of pain so I can gain.
I cry tears of pain
for my loved ones who are no longer here.
I cry tears of pain
because sometimes I feel alone and no one cares.
These tears come when I feel bare.
I cry tears of pain.

To be in jail feels like I am living under the world,
far, far away from existing.
A lot of times I just watch the sky.
It changes sunny, cloudy, rainy, and dark,
but after night comes the light.

It's just the same days, different trays,
I'm getting sick of these days and nasty trays,
I work out and write to release my mind
and get away from the situation I am in.

I am in jail.

-Titandium

MONROE COUNTY JAIL (CONT.)

Me

Me,
I am seventeen
living a life I should not be living.
I want to see myself going to college.
I was just a teen living my life on the block hustling.
Why do I do this?
I was trying to be a real thug like Trick Daddy and Young Jeezy.
Right now
I want to get out of Monroe County Jail
and finish school and start a family.

Coretta Scott King's life was all about the struggle, and how hard it was. She lived with pain and trouble. She did the right thing.

Me,
when I was just thirteen
I wanted to be like everyone else.
I was already in a bad 'hood.
I grew up on the streets, Dewey.
I wanted to be a gang banger,
a hustler, a big time drug dealer.
One day I joined a gang.
I really don't know why.
I just guess because I wanted to be cool.

Rosa Parks made a choice to commit a crime. She once said, "I am black. I am hurt. I have seen people get hurt."

Me,
I really don't know what I want to be
or what I want to do in the future.

Me,
my place in the world,
I just want to fit into the world
and be respected.

Nelson Mandela wanted to change the world. He had so many dreams.

Me,
this is my second time in here.
This is my second time getting caught.
This is my second time.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wondered why he couldn't live civilized. He saw the pain in his family's eyes.

Since I was sixteen
I have been in and out of jail.
I now can say I know I have made bad choices in the past.
I am ready now to make a change in my life.
Now I sit around and go to school every day.
The food here, though, is not so great at all.

Me,
the orange makes me feel like I am nobody.
I talk to counselors for help and guidance.
I want people to understand what I have been through during my lifetime.
I know what people think of me,
they think I am bad, confused, and misled.

Me, I am me.

My grandmother cries
because her grandson is in jail.
I hate to see her aching in pain.
I hate to see her shaking with shame.

Me,
it hurts me
because I know I have failed.
I am tired of being here.
All I see when I wake up are the bright lights.
The only time I am happy is when I get mail.

Being in jail is not cool.
It all started when I had family problems,
and I started hustling and played the block.
I started coming home late,
caught my first charge
and came home on a pretrial.
Months later I violated,
and I went on the run.
I got bagged, then sent to County, and then behind bars.

I have dreams.
I know the only way to get there is to fight upstream.
When I was sixteen,
I looked at death.
Now I am seventeen.

Me,
I have three months left.
I can't wait to touch the ground.
No more drugs and guns,
I am putting them past me.

I have a lot to live for.
I am a kid who made mistakes,
and I paid dearly for them.

Jail is not me.
When you are in jail, time goes more slowly than tadpoles growing.
You are locked in your cell for twenty-three hours,
with only one hour out.
That one hour feels like just minutes.
Sometimes,
I don't even want to leave my cell.
The only things I can do are push-ups, sit-ups,
and read the Bible and sleep.

This all started by hanging out with the wrong people,
started when I hustled and played the block.
I was addicted to the streets.
Now I have cuffs on my hands and shackles on my feet.
Jail is fighting, nasty food, being harassed, and getting backstabbed.
I fight my own race, the food is nasty, Deps harass me.

Me,
my nights are bad; my days are rough,
but this is the life I chose.
It's sad.
Why me?
I ask the Lord every night
thinking about what I did.
I must learn why.
Why am I here praying every night, asking God for forgiveness.
Why am I here
having bad dreams at night
and wondering how God is going to end this.

-Wondell

I know the only way to get there is to fight upstream.

THE BEAT WITHOUT

MONROE COUNTY JAIL (CONT.)

Give Me Some Time

Chorus:
Give me some time to show you I'm more than matter in a cell.
I'm not a bad person even though my actions weren't well.
Please don't ignore the fact that we all need a second chance.
There's more to me, take a second glance.
You'll see a young man, who was misguided, with so much energy to show.
You'll see he can't get tired.
Why is this the way I am being punished?
They say change should be here soon, when is it coming?

Verse One:
If I approach you like, how are you doing,
will you look at me in another way and if so why would you do it?
I'm tired of losing,
but in this system there is no winning,
wrong move, you're gone dude and no one's giving.
I had to learn the hard way.
I think of it all day.
This youth's crazy, ask the judge, that's what they all say.
This is ball play, but I'm in the wrong game.
It's too easy to do the wrong thing, how can we all change.
Since they think we are all deranged, that's the stereotype.
Come all the closer and you'll see what my area is like.
I'm from where most people are scared of the night,
and eighty percent of dudes get shot 'cause the others are scared of the fight,
either that or they have some type of beef,
a lot of fatherless kids.
Childless moms, that's some type of grief.
Dear Lord can you help now.
I need you to answer this question:
Why are these the cards you dealt me out.

Chorus:
Give me some time to show you I'm more than matter in a cell.
I'm not a bad person even though my actions weren't well.
Please don't ignore the fact that we all need a second chance.
There's more to me, take a second glance.
You'll see a young man, who was misguided, with so much energy to show.
You'll see he can't get tired.
Why is this the way I am being punished?
They say change should be here soon, when is it coming?

Verse Two:
Give me some time.
Without giving me time, even though I committed a crime
I'm about spitting these rhymes.
I try to make it still,
take a thought out of my head, make it real,
share it with the people.
Why do you see me as a boy, not a man,
but instead you want to play with my life,
as if you see me as a toy,
Know I could have been a hooper or a physician,
but the judge said, "Lock him up," to assure that I'm not in that position.
I'm not optimistic. Listen, I'm trying to better myself,
better my wealth to more than a pot to spit and piss in.
Lately I've been feeling down some,
but the best reason to change my life right now I think I found.
I think I'm drowning some in my own sorrow.
God lead me to righteousness, and I'm going to follow.
I just hope it's not too late.

Chorus:
Give me some time to show you I'm more than matter in a cell.
I'm not a bad person even though my actions weren't well.
Please don't ignore the fact that we all need a second chance.
There's more to me, take a second glance.
You'll see a young man, who was misguided, with so much energy to show.
You'll see he can't get tired.
Why is this the way I am being punished?
They say change should be here soon, when is it coming?

Verse Three:
I know that I could tell you that I have changed,
but will you listen?
Throw me a new sentence.
I'm known as a menace by those who don't know me.
I'm noticing someone knew the right way, but no one wanted to show me.
The only true talk, lights ever go off in my cell,
but it's to get what I mean this like a nightmare,
but I can't sleep.
I want to experience different drums.
Same tray cake, no different crème, this is what we get fed,
no meat, but we grab bread and some butter.
The majority of us come colored with no family in here,
with me though there's a bunch of us brothers.
We all suffer, we all stress.
Don't do the same.
Since I come from the streets should I act like this is where I want to be?

-Antoine

For My People

I am writing for all those whose skin is the same as mine,
men, women, and children, we all need help.
Our mothers and fathers go to work and come home tired,
working to feed their families
while their children run wild on the streets.
Most of the children are drug dealers on the corners
and do nothing with their lives,
thinking they are getting money,
wanting to be thugs or hard.
They use guns to speak for them.

The streets have changed
and will continue to change.
What will we do ten or twenty years from now.
The way I see it
is there will be a town or city with nobody in it.
Why, because everybody is dead or in jail.

Our little brothers and sisters are using guns.
When they die, who's left?

People may laugh at you for being in school,
but you can always say
at least I know where I'm going to be in ten or twenty years.

A person once told me a mind is a terrible thing to waste,
but I noticed
they knew a lot about the streets
but didn't know a lot about African-American history
except the usual things,
like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, or Thurgood Marshall.
Let me hear something about Emmett Till.

My Black people ask
why do we kill each other,
why do we put each other down?

-Kevin

To Whom It May Concern

Little by little, our individual rights are being stripped away. Politicians and those who make policy play semantics with the law to further their own agenda, especially when it comes to the limited rights and privileges of inmates. Dostoevski said, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." I have done so. Not to judge society, but because society had judged me. Now, I wear a scarlet letter, because no matter how well I state my point, or verse obvious logic all I say will first be seen as something tainted with criminal intent before even being taken into consideration. But that's okay. I understand. I too would be leery of what a convict serving time would say. However, leery or not, I would still listen.

Today I bring to your attention, a Family Visiting Reform Initiative that would once again allow inmates serving life sentences to have the same visiting privileges as those who are not. This initiative argues that lifers (who are not granted family/ conjugal visits) are unfairly targeted, and that current policy is prejudiced. Not only that, but the initiative also argues the point that by granting lifers the same privileges as other inmates, we create stronger social and family ties, create incentive to rehabilitate, and help unite families.

Having a life sentence, I sometimes feel that it's nothing to do wrong, get into fights, violate rules. I got life, so why should I worry about following a cop's program? I got years to do anyway. These visits remind people like me that there is something to lose. Something worth trying for. that, even though I have 18 more years before I am eligible for parole, I still will be eligible someday. This would allow me to play with my daughter in a more comfortable, less intimidating setting, surrounded not by other cons and guards, but by her mother and grandmother. I could read her bedtime stories, teach her how to deal with moral dilemmas. Be a father, even if it's for just one weekend a month.

Of course, like anything worth having, this is a privilege that must be earned. AA classes and anger management courses must be completed prior to visiting. Other minor hurdles as well. But it's worth it because it makes something special possible. First 415,000 signatures are needed if this initiative is to make the November 2006 Ballot, or 373,816 registered voter signatures. For more information an copy of the initiative, contact:

Carmen Finnie
P.O. Box 2411
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741

Please remember that you don't have to be a lifer to get this info, or to lobby your family and friends to support this initiative. All you have to do is care about changing an unfair law that doesn't really protect as much as it destroys the hopes, dreams, and family tiers lifers posses. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

We're always speaking highly of this next writer. I guess you could say we're jockin' him. But we're not doing so for no reason, he's incredible. Each week he amazes us with his thoughts and how he's able to express them like no other. Whether it's a letter to the masses, or a poem from the heart, it doesn't matter, this writer simply has a gift. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. His first piece is one we think everyone should read because he's asking for a little bit of support and it sounds like he has every right to. As you'll read, they're trying to get the Family Visiting Reform Initiative placed on the November ballot. And it sounds like a much needed initiative, so please read his piece and if you have further questions, he gives contact information for a place that can be reached. Hopefully enough people will vote on the initiative and help our friend Ray Sanchez out because he's helped us in so many ways. Thanks Ray...

Untitled

You're always the most interesting person around when you're all alone
And the big fish on the block, when the block is your home
But even big fish drown out of town and in alien waters
Regardless of who you know, roll wit', or where you crush powder
Clam yowder fish scale, balled up from nada
Banana clips and pineapple grenades: explosive piña Coladas and drama unparalleled
No matter how big you do,
There'll be somebody wit' mo' sales that do it bigger than you

Destruction's decided
The heart's nature is predestined
Peace bought through wars waged
Is a peace that is tainted

Kids Weren't Meant...

Roads were meant to be walked upon
Blocks were meant to be stomped on
But kids weren't meant
For the serious shhh that I grew up with
Pressure from clicks
That seemed like love
Pop culture said cop boulder, rock wit' thugs
BM's caught up
In the high life of propaganda, false values
Dressin' their innocents
In click colors and smash through
Showing off tattoos
Got baby's daddy name on her titty
She envied
By other hood rats who claim the same city
Squabin' over men they ain't married wit'
And carry kids
Treatin' they baby boys like toys
And daughters like princesses
Barbie dolls that's life sized
But let grandma handle they cries
And go dance in the night
Club life, thizzin'
Runaway fo' days, fo' a whole week missin'
Caught up and locked up
Whinin' that you miss your baby
If the roles were reversed
How'd you feel, young lady?
Maybe,
Daily responsibilities too much for you
Too much to do, and deal wit'
Kids weren't meant
Fo' the serious shhh I grew up wit'

The Way That Was Lost

A man may build
But a woman creates
Birthing love's potential
The new hope of a dreamer's dreams
Endless possibilities

The prejudices of men are learned
Affection is inherent
As natural as the tender coos given
From adoring mother, to suckling babe
The purity of soul becomes apparent

Destruction's decided
The heart's nature is predestined
Peace bought through wars waged
Is a peace that is tainted

The Tao of the heart is beyond man
Though the child sees it clearly
The mother feels it briefly, sporadically
Man wears pride's blinders and,
Will pay for it most dearly

Yea, our way is lost in age's maze
Gone with imagination
Sweet innocence ignorance
Lost in reality, statistics, false desires,
Non-intrinsic, unimportant goals
Only noticed once youth is old
And greatly felt is our regret
When our time of doing is gone
And the way is lost is the sunset

JEREMY TOWNER ***Last week we mistakenly thought that this week would be the conclusion to Jeremy's compelling autobiography, but luckily we were wrong. In this chapter he has his first brush with the law as he finds himself in Mendocino County (north of San Francisco) with no way to keep going. And we all know what happens when we need to act in desperation. We usually don't make the right decisions in those cases. So, like with the rest of us, he made a mistake that landed him in juvenile hall. The interesting thing with Jeremy, though, is that he was hoping to see the very same man he spent all these months running away from — his father. From there the suspense explodes. He's kept us on the edge of our seats thus far. We know he won't let us down. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and now that we've realized this wasn't his last chapter, he's got us patiently waiting for more — one of the most important characteristics of a good storyteller. And that he is...***

Chapter 4: Sucked Into The System

I didn't want it to be this way but things have a way of happening. Eventually it balances out and all the bad things you've done in your life come back to haunt and alter your life, for better or worse is up to the perceiver to decide.

That last day I was in my home, something in my mind took hold of my actions. Maybe it was my hatred or frustration starving of patience. But whatever it was it was not what I would have done under normal circumstances.

As I was walking through the house looking for a sleeping bag, or at least a blanket, I went to look for cash and so I went to my father's room to look for some money but found very little. I then went to my grandma's room and grabbed her "bb" gun and some credit cards. I wasn't discrete about it. In fact I made quite a mess of the house looking for anything valuable. There wasn't much that caught my interest so I left Santa Rosa that day and split up from the group. Me and my friend Jeffery Ellis went one way and the rest went their own way. We all agreed to meet in Seattle. Not one of us, though, would make it.

Me and Jeff made it about as far as Mendocino County, Ukiah when we ran out of money. It was 1:00 in the morning and neither of us were tired so we decided to keep going. The problem was we had no transportation. An idea, I would regret later, popped into my careless mind and before we knew it we stole two bikes and were headed towards the on ramp to the freeway.

It was easy taking the bikes. I mean they were just lying around and evil opportunity presented itself. We never made it to the freeway though. As soon as we got on the on ramp we were surrounded by what seemed the entire town's police force. I guess nothing happens much in Ukiah for the police.

Right then I realized that I was losing control of what I wanted. My life, given to me alone, was slipping away from my control and was now bouncing around trying to be reigned in by a greater force. Uncontrolled by my own will I had no choice but to go with the flow.

So I went with the flow and began to adapt again to a new type of lifestyle. In order to disappear and survive one needs to accustom himself to the order of life around him. If you don't, then you become an unwanted intruder and a target of the group's criticism and what seems to be sarcastic, violent, degenerate behavior. I became this target. Time and time again I let myself become the source of amusement and each time I did, more of my will slipped away leaving an unstable void of my spirit ready to be filled with hatred and insanity. It got so bad that I began to have spontaneous behavior on the spur of the moment. So I stayed in my cell most of the time until it was time to go to court.

When the time finally came the judge had a field day. He made it a point to criticize greatly and in my eyes he was just a pompous ass who hated his job. But he did me a favor and kicked me out of Mendocino County forever.

It was a relief to be moving again. I got a spark of hope for a fresh start and a new impression upon the new group of juveniles that I would soon be joining.

They transferred me back to the Santa Rosa County Juvenile Hall Los Gillacos and there my fate was to be decided. When I did go to court there, the judge set a date and told me that I could go home if my dad would come and pick me up. I didn't see that coming and I was happy because now I could go home on a clean slate with the system. They took me back to my cell and I had to do nothing but wait a couple weeks and I'd be free.

So in the meantime I waited I figured I'd try to get into some program to keep busy so the time would go by faster. I went to school, but I soon lost interest in that. So I tried to get into some recreational contests. I was always very competitive. I knew that if I lost it was because I could have done better and then I would. I became good at ping-pong. And started to learn chess. Only thing was I couldn't be good behaviorally for very long because everyone was a critic or had something to prove. I tried to stay away from it all by staying in my cell once again and read nothing but big books like, "The Clan Of The Cave Bear" series and such, but I also needed to get some exercise. Every time I came out though I would once again become the target and the void filled with hatred would boil up. I could never release it though. I never "took off" (fought) on anyone out of my own rage. I just couldn't do it. I think it was the fear of losing the fight and taking on even more criticism and shame is what stayed my hands. So I took my anger out on the walls in my cell. I would hit the walls so hard that my hands would swell up, and when my hand hurt real bad, I would give the wall one last good and hard punch just to distract my mind from thinking about my cowardice. Oh boy did it hurt, but you can't argue with what works — at least not at that age.

That's about when I gave up my spirit. I didn't care no more what happened and I think I went insane. My hands hurt so bad that I needed to find another way to distract my rage so I got a hold of an eraser from school and I would rub my arm with it until the skin came off and I started to bleed. I got used to the pain, in fact, I had adapted to the pain so much that whenever I got hurt again I would laugh because it felt ticklish. However the blood on my arms attracted the attention of the counselors and they wanted to know what was wrong and if they could help. That just made me more angry because the answer was so damn obvious.

How the hell could they help me if they can't see the obvious. But when I didn't talk, they took all my things including my eraser.

All this in just a couple weeks while waiting for my dad. I was too weak to handle juvy for just a couple weeks.

Well, court finally came. I was very glad about that. Now I would go home and straighten everything out and hopefully get on with a life.

As I went in to court though and looked around I couldn't see my father. I started to panic but I stayed calm on the off chance that he was waiting for me outside. Then the judge began to drivel on and on about something or other. Then she really let me have it by saying that because my father wouldn't come and pick me up that I was now to be put into the system. She then said that I was to be put into a group home. So basically I was to change or disappear forever. The force of the shock of the demand was too much. So I went with the flow. I went where they wanted me too. But I'd be damned if I do what they say. It was futile but it was all I had. I became so withdrawn that I started to become like a robot with an anger management problem. Everyday was the same. Every meal was the same. Wake up call to lights out and everything in between was the same.

After a couple months of madness, I was interviewed by Diamond Peek Boys homeowner Eric Perry, in Lassen County, Susanville, CA. They asked me about four or five questions and the next thing I know I was picked out of the litter and on my way to a six-month program.

When I was dressed out I got the same old clothes that I wore when I was arrested in Ukiah. They didn't smell too

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bad though.

The guy who picked me up for the long drive was nice enough. He tried to put me at ease the entire drive up to Susanville. He said that Susanville was a great town that just loved their football. There's a lot of people to meet and the kids at the house were all right and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Some of the way to Susanville I would stare out the window and watch the scenery. It was like being at peace once again like when I was a kid on a horse long ago. Then I would look at all the fun times I had on the streets. All the park barbecues and sharing beers with my friends. All the times we got high together and strolled the town doing stupid things just to make each other laugh. I thought about Akasha and what the hell I was thinking when I was with her. Then I thought of my dad and stopped thinking. I would sigh and say, "Oh well" because you can't change what's done only what's going to happen next. Then I went back to the scenery because it's the last I'd see of it for a while. Fate was evil with a nasty hand. I felt it slap me too many times.

JEREMY TOWNER (CONT.)

Fallen Soul

This life of mine
In all good time
Has all been for not
I ran head long
In all things wrong
My will fell weak
My ego was strong
I dispelled distrust
For corrupted lust
I looked to gain
Ignoring others pain
For what they worked
The demons in my mind
In shadows they lurked
The snare of sin
My spirit was worked
Exhausted it fell
Unchallenged by the dark
Further do I drift
Seeing nothing with my eyes
Doing things I know
God does despise
How deep is this space
No light or a voice to hear
Stuck with my nightmares
It becomes a place of fear
Insanity becomes my veil
Over my mind is the shroud
Too foggy to see what's right
My head is in the clouds
It becomes me to death
"Come down to this level
Where you'll never care again
Come down fallen spirit
Welcome to Satan's din"

GREG JOHNSON

As soon as we started to doubt ourselves because of all the people out there hating on us, a hero steps out from the darkness and rekindles the flame that keeps us illuminated. Greg Johnson, who writes from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, is one of our most dedicated and powerful Beat writers. As you can tell from this next piece, he takes The Beat Within very serious and for that we appreciate him. Every day we wake up and come to work, enveloped in our own little routines like the rest of society. Like the rest of society we try hard to bury thoughts of the constant deterioration going on around us by remaining busy. Then, we come to work and are constantly liberated from this institutionalizing routine by those of you who take this publication as serious as we do. And maybe in Greg's case, take it even more serious than we do. Several weeks ago we published a piece by a man who disagreed with what The Beat was about. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, so we can't be mad. But the hard part about being a publication that wants to keep your voices raw is that we can't respond to things like that even though we were itching to. Well, Greg responds for us and we probably couldn't have put it better than him anyway. Thank you for your loyalty and dedication. It's people like you who keep us moving, keep us running. Don't be such a stranger next time though.

Beat Appreciation

In defense of The Beat Within, their facilitators, their readership, their writers and their editors

Although I've submitted only one written response to an article (poem/rap) in The Beat Within over the years, this will be my second. In volume 11.23, page 55 of The Beat Without section, a writer named Ernest Reynolds expressed his disgust with the "magazine". He is surly mistaken.

Mr. Reynolds, you're basing your opinions on what? How many Beat Withins have you had the privilege of reading? 10? 12? 20? 50? Well, it's published approximately 50 times per year so for me, I've read what, 500? In the past 10 years. I believe I'm more qualified to make that assessment than you are. There may be isolated pieces published in The Beat throughout the years, but you make is sound as if this "racism" is in every other issue. Most of the pieces in question, the writings, come from the youth. They are still learning. It's what they believe. Some of their claims of racism may be exaggerated, but most aren't, some may be excuses for their criminal activities, but most aren't.

The beauty of The Beat Within is they publish the thoughts and opinions of those who have the courage to share their lives regardless of what others think. If someone believes it's the "white establishment" or "racism" that has contributed to their incarceration, who are you to challenge this? Mr. Reynolds, were you ever unfortunate enough to live and grow up in the ghetto? Ever lived in poverty? Been without shoes? Ever have to wear the same clothes to school and be the subject of ridicule? Ever have to steal food because it was necessary to feed your brothers and sisters? Have you ever ran out of food 2 weeks before the welfare checks and food stamps came and having to go to the food bank?

Guess what Mr. Reynolds? I'm white. I'm willing to bet you thought I was black? That little line right there is unfair to you because it's a stereotype. Maybe even a "racist" statement. Who am I to automatically assume that you think I'm black? Do you get my point? I know racism exists. I've seen both sides of racism and neither is pleasant. I lived that life in the ghetto. Am I white trash because I grew up in a black ghetto? Am I considered a sympathizer? I call it as I see it. Nothing else.

As for the situation in Iraq, the basic concept for America going to war was that they had weapons of mass destruction. But this turned out to be, not only false, but a blatant lie. As The Beat points out, there are many world leaders who are responsible or suspected of committing the same acts Saddam Hussein did, but they're still in power and America still does business with them

It's not The Beat Within's job to "correct", as you claim, any writings submitted to them. That's what makes The Beat so unique. Have you read their disclaimer in the table of contents section? Turn the very first page and you'll discover it. It states, in part, "The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor, or staff."

Don't blame the publishers of The Beat Within for your so-called "disappointment". Look at how critical your article towards The Beat is, yet it was still published. Talk about free speech at work. And your claims that The Beat is the "lamest, stupidest" thing you've ever read is far from true. Maybe you need to educate yourself on this topic before you pass judgment.

You don't wish to share your drawing, so be it, you're definitely not obligated to submit anything. All submissions are voluntary. Unlike you, there are people who wish to share and display their talents. Darn, I forgot one thing, you won't read this piece because you've requested to be taken off the mailing list. That's too bad. You may have learned a thing or two.

I'm disappointed in you, Mr. Reynolds, for being misguided and not properly informed.

And to those who work for The Beat Within, whether for only a few weeks, months or even years, and to those who write and draw and share their lives to people you don't even know, don't be discouraged. The Beat Within is definitely not the "lamest, stupidest" publication as Mr. Reynolds has claimed. You people work too hard to put together this thing, week after week, to believe that.

Thank you for your time and patience.

FRANK SERRANO ***The Beat is magical in that people who've been there and done that give us pieces speaking the younger people that we see in our workshops every week. Some would argue that we promote gang activity and other negative things. But if this very same critics were to pick up a Beat week in and week out like the rest of us do, they would have no choice but to see this magic taking place. One of our favorite magicians wrote us a piece for you youngsters to read. He starts off by saying there's good in bad, it just depends on how you perceive and interpret that particular situation. Then he goes on to say how incarceration can be a good thing if you make it that way. What would most of you being doing if you weren't locked up right now? Probably getting shot at, running from the police, or beating down a dope fiend for not paying you on time. So maybe being locked up is a blessing in disguise. But who knows? Maybe you're also missing out on things you won't ever be able to experience again. Whatever the case we feel like you should read this next piece sent to us from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. This guy really knows what he's talking about, so let the magician do his magic.***

Change

I've been and still am where you are. Being isolated within concrete walls is not the end of the road. This may come to you as a surprise but what appears to be a hopeless journey ahead of you, a path filled with grief, sorrow and anguish. It's actually a fortunate turn of events. There is good in bad. It's a matter of perception and interpretation. Living as you previously were, you wouldn't have had an opportunity to discover and realize the potential you truly possess. Think about how much energy you invest and exhaust, physically and mentally, to commit and see through the shady deeds that brought you to your present situation.

You were good at what you did. Not good enough to get away with it and avoid capture. But you were self-assured. You followed your plan to the letter. By this, you demonstrate that you have what it takes to be successful. You're determined, self-controlled and you have motive that, I believe, is rooted and stems from a driven desire to escape and break out of the chains that confine you since birth — poverty! Some of you are reading this and think that poverty played no role in the life you lead. Look around you, you see rich people next to you? I know money is not the answer but had you had money would you be where you are now, would you have done what you did?

Maybe you just wanted fame, glory, and respect. You wanted your name remembered by your rivals and your own social circle, to be the homeboy or homegirl that others will be proud and honored to talk about. This, in turn, gives you a sense of pride in just knowing that you are looked up to. You've earned your respect and now, young wannabe's will want what you have and will do what you have done. Congratulations! You reached your goal. What you fail to see and still are not aware of, there is more to it than that now. You have something now. You are in a position to help those new up and comers, to lead by example but to begin by directing your own life to a place beyond those self-created impossibilities. You've probably been telling yourself, as we all did at one point, if you get out of this situation and beat this case, you'll do good, right? Have you also prayed to promising your mother, father and loved one's to do the same? I believe in you! You have my vote of confidence because I know it's not out of your reach but I'll be straight out with you — you're lying to yourself and every one else.

What are you doing to change the things that brought you where you are? When you get out, if you hopefully do make it out, not much has changed. Your homeboys and homegirls are still waiting for you — after all, you are a hero in their eyes now. Didn't they write to you to tell you that? The neighborhood is the same and guess what, poverty still runs supreme. You'll get out and still want what others have. Your materialistic mind will come alive once you see how good others have it and you don't. This feeling will trigger a sense of anger you're very much familiar with, only to incite you to resort to what you know best because taking from others is the easiest way for you. It takes work to gain the things worth having but it's the kind of work we aren't willing to do, or for some of us, we don't know how to begin since we too are a byproduct of a past generation we looked up to and whose footsteps we followed. There's nothing wrong with that. We are all influenced by someone we tend to admire and aspire to be like. It is human nature. As kids, we were captivated by action heroes like Superman, Spiderman, and many others. Not that we wanted to be like these make-believe characters but the point being, there is someone in our lives we related with most. It can be a positive effect if we intend it that way from the beginning.

You, individually are a powerful person. By nature, we are all animals (you didn't know that, right?) the difference being, we are thinking animals with the ability and capacity to reason. We are able to hope, to wish, to strive towards a state of happiness and a blissful future. We also avoid, preferably, misery and pain. At this point in your life, making these choices and decisions are of your own free will. Understandably, your body is restraint. Your movement is limited and someone else controls where your body ends up. But it's not the end of your life. Your future is still in your hands because you still possess the one thing that no one can confine within these cemented slabs — your mind! No matter where you are, your mind remains free. You are free to travel and explore a world outside those walls. You can't say you never closed your eyes and imagine yourself somewhere else? You can picture it clearly and sense it in a realistic way. No one can take that from you. Changes can come now.

As I said before, the determination and desire is within you. You don't lack will-power and what I mean by that is, there is a part of you that gives you the strength to continue living no matter how hard things may get for you. That same force is what keeps you smiling, laughing, and finding humor in the things that others don't. You adapt in order to survive, think about that, it's happening without your awareness. Of course, some may act as if it's a natural part of their way of being. It's a false sense of confidence — don't be fooled into thinking they are unaffected, nor that they are stronger than you because the truth is none of us start off and enter an unknown environment without truly knowing what awaits us nor with the assurance to know how to overcome the obstacles ahead.

If later in life, and if unfortunately, you are still within these walls, you'll acquire the surviving skills it takes to cope, overcome and adapt to your present circumstance. You'll never get used to it, you should never admit you are… Doing so means you are defeated. You surrendered yourself to a fate no longer in your grasp. You've killed your fighting spirit! Don't make that mistake spiritually, be rebellious. Understand yourself and realize your strengths and weaknesses. Maintain your strengths and work on building up the things that you feel are soft, breakable, penetratable, and vulnerable in one way or another. If you believe yourself to be strong all the way around, you're living in a fantasy world. It's an illusion that can cost you a great deal of heartache and pain.

You think it makes you weak to admit you have weaknesses? You'll never do nothing about it if you deny it and keep putting it off. You're strong, tough, and find that it's enough to beat up on others. I commend you on your victories but being able to fight is no talent in itself. It should come with the territory and lifestyle unless you enjoy being a victim. It's a single gratification that'll carry you only so far. As time passes you'll find yourself questioning whether you've accomplished enough? You'll ask yourself if you've done enough, gained enough, and wondering what good it has brought you beside a superficial and empty sense of achievement? You've wasted time already! Let me ask you this. Do you know everything there is to know, have you seen everything there is to see have you lived a satisfactory and complete life with no regrets? If you answer "Yes" to any of these questions, you're not only lying but you are lost and confused. If you say or hear someone else say "They've been there, done that," as most people often say, it's untrue. No one has done it all or seen it all. We could live 100 life times and there will still be mysteries unknown to us.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't challenge ourselves. We should try to learn something new everyday. We can learn from the smallest things and through learning, we get to know ourselves that much more. I'm in my 30's, going on 15 years in prison and I still am learning a great deal. Through education, I'm able to better use my mind, to see the consequences of my actions before I take them I'm also able to write what I'm sharing with you in a way easily understood. I couldn't have done any of these things had

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I now aspired to learn you'll see the world differently and appreciate the things you take for granted. I'll give you a few examples that are in front of you but you never cared enough to give them a second thought.

Did you know the sun is actually a star? Did you know the sky is blue because light bounces off the surface of the ocean, or did you know the ocean isn't really blue? It's every other color but it rejects the color blue and therefore, we perceive it as blue. Just like an orange. It really isn't orange and an apple isn't really red. Everything we see is in black and white but our brain cerates colors. Don't you want to know more?

Doesn't it peak your interest? Does it make you realize how much there is to know? I was also angry, frustrated, bothered, and felt a deep hatred. I can relate to you in many ways. But, I learned to channel, direct those negative emotions and use them in a constructive way. You think your reality is hard and cruel, wait until you figure out that everything you are doing is hurting you more than anything your worst enemy can do to you. Most of you don't understand what I'm saying or why I'm saying it. Some of you don't care, but you will, eventually. I've been in Pelican Bay S.H.U., in an 8' by 10' windowless cell for more than 9 years now. I think that gives me credibility growth. You can avoid a lot of drama and pain through education, if you choose to remain in a state of ignorance — I'll see you soon. Can you really endure a lifetime in this place — dying in slow motion?

It's a long and dark journey.
Blindly, you'll navigate yourself in this lonely route

FRANK SERRANO (CONT.)

Wishing you knew the ins and outs.
Though you're too proud to show it,
You rather be tough and unfazed
But inside, you cry out and shout.
You want help through this maze
A guide or a skillful scout,
Someone who's been in your shoes
Who's fought bout after bout.
You get by filled with anger and aggression,
Demonstrating sign of weakness and frustration.
You tell yourself,
There's no fame and glory in an education.
So you're in and out of court.
Fighting case after case.
You came in short,
With no time at all,
But soon you'll touch base
From Juvi. Hall to such a place
Where the sun never soothes your face.
You'll be out of sight, out of mind
And everyone will forget you.
Don't be a fool,
There's no more to this life.
Listen... and stay out of prison

P.S. I wrote this for the youngsters throughout the system and abroad. I believe in lighting a candle with another.

FRISKIE

Every time we see more than a couple pieces from our beloved Friskie, we get sad. And not because she's not an excellent writer (everyone knows she is), but because we know that usually means she's locked back up. And that she is. Writing from Ventura (one of Y-A's several institutions) in Camarillo, CA, Friskie hits us with a few poems. From feeling bad for what she's done to being 'frustrated' for what the system is doing to her, she describes many feelings within these few pieces. And we just want her to know that one of the things that's universal with no matter what type of drug you use is that it stunts your emotional growth. That's why we use drugs in the first place, so we don't have to 'feel' anymore. The only problem with that is when the drug wears off, are feelings are still there. We don't know anyone who feels as much as Friskie. We hope this time is the last and will support her in any way we can. Stay tuned because we'll have more from her next week.

Dedicated To That Special One

Love, I'm sorry baby, I didn't mean to hurt you.
I don't know why I didn't stay by your side.
I don't understand why I allowed myself to hurt you.
Baby I really do care about you.
I don't know if I love you, but you'll always have a place in my heart.
You the first to respect me, which is why I am so confused.
I think that's where my love for you comes from
'Cause I'm used to being used.
But for real, you deserve better.
I'm not worthy of you.
I'm looking at your picture now, seeing the same sweater
That I wore before, the same lips that I kissed,
And I want you to know that you are truly missed.
I do love you.
I've decided, but not for the money, cars, or clothes,
Only for you and your respect.
So I apologize for this neglect.
Love, just promise me this:
That I'll still have a place in your heart until your first married kiss.
I know I can promise you the same.
And because you showed me love, I promise I'll try to change...
But, it's hard letting go.....

Frustrated

Frustrated and angry
My hunger pains me
We want our program now
But these stupid staff won't let us out
There ain't shhh to do
But we tryna keep it cool
But these girls yelling down the hall is starting to piss us off
I hella just want to yell shut up, or squat and cough
Staff is doing us dirty, treating us like we ain't shhh
These lil' girls tryna throw a fit
Banging on they doors
Callin' each other whores
Damn! We hella frustrated
Girls here think they know wassup
These females been here for years,
Feel me they almost in they 20's and they still haven't grown up
They're arms they cut
And they take shhh up the butt
People need to take their meds
And take they self to bed
'Cause they causing this ache in my head
These people are loud enough to wake the dead
They need to have their self put to sleep
These females aren't completely illiterate,
They at least know how to count sheep
But with some of these broads ya' never know
And they ain't ashamed to let it show!
There's so much homosexuality
Damn these girls is really tryna traumatize me
They better leave our shhh alone
Or else we gonna have our lawyers on the phone
I ain't gonna let no female get away with shhh
Wow! I really wanna smoke and get lit
Damn we hella frustrated

FRISKIE (CONT.)

I learned about the streets when I was young
At 11 years old the homeboys showed me how to use a gun
Damn, I just can't stop myself from sinning
But wicked is the life that I'm living

Living Part II

(Verse 1)
Once upon a time committing crime in the slums
Can't afford to whine when you sellin' D to bums
When I get out, I'll have been locked up for over sixteen months
All because of what I did on the run and smoking meth instead of blunts
My reality is a tragedy, enough to leave you in tears
But ya' ain't nothing compared to my past years
I learned about the streets when I was young
At 11 years old the homeboys showed me how to use a gun
Damn, I just can't stop myself from sinning
But wicked is the life that I'm living
Then I hear a voice say to me inside my heart
Baby stop living wicked so we don't have to be apart
There was so much hate inside of me
That it resulted in self inflicted injury
But now that I got my man, I'm looking at shhh differently
Since the day he told me, it's been like one big epiphany
But here at YA, it's kinda hard to live good
After all, here ya' gotta put into practice what you learned in the hood

(Chorus)
Why do I play the game if it's impossible to win?
Why did I put myself in the situation that I'm in?
It ain't gotta be this way, 'cause tomorrow's a new day
I can put the past behind me, but I can never throw it away
No matter how hard I try 'cause these feelings will always stay
So why do I play the game if it's impossible to win?
I hope that I'll change 'cause of this new mind frame that I'm in

(Verse 2)
When the darkness settles in
Is when I begin to sin, cheesing it with an evil grin
I stay with my patnas who be steady pulling all-nighters
And don't think that cha gotta use yo 'hands to be fighters
My blocks necessities! Heaters, meth, Newports, and lighters
I'm down fo' anything I'm yo' number one stunnin' rida'
But being down is crucial, a life or death situation
So, in the end my devotion comes as a complication
I ain't about kicking it no more,
Posting it on the block has become my occupation
My mind and love's devotion is only fo' the land
That surrounds the Bay Area's ocean
Will I ever be rid of this mentality that has been inflicted?
It's like my mind's being constricted
Damn, I'm getting tired of living wicked

(Chorus)
Why do I play the game if it's impossible to win?
Why did I put myself in the situation that I'm in?
It ain't gotta be this way, 'cause tomorrow's a new day
I can put the past behind me, but I can never throw it away
No matter how hard I try 'cause these feelings will always stay
So why do I play the game if it's impossible to win?
I hope that I'll change 'cause of this new mind frame that I'm in
(Inspired by Richard)

Come Back Home

Here are the pieces of my broken heart
Here are the feelings I've felt from the start
Now that I'm on my own
Baby I'm sorry I know it's been too long
I didn't mean to hurt you
I'm sorry baby I didn't know what to do
And now that you're gone
I'm alone writing this song
You told me you loved me and everything would be okay
Trusted you and held on to you to this day
And baby I know that I hurt you in more than one way.
But baby please
I'm on my knees
Begging for you to come back home
I love you

RIP (Dedicated To Irma)

Hey girl, what's it like in the sky
Is heaven what people say it is?
Do you ever see people cry?
Damn girl, I still can't believe it was in god's plan for you to die
I wish I could've said goodbye
Do you think I am capable of being good if I try?
I miss you homegirl
Do you ever look down from heaven into the world?
Damn, in April it will have been a year since you left
As the dark day approaches I become even more stressed
I hope you know I pray for your family everyday
Can you believe I got sent to CYA?
I don't know why but I keep holding a grudge
On the two girls who contributed to your death
I'm sorry I was locked up the day you were laid to rest
I just wish you were here
Damn! I don't want to cry but I can't stop these slowing, drawing tears
I think god taking you was a mistake
My life was the one that he should have decided to take
I've been thinking I should be cool off e-pills
Ever since I found out that you were gone
It feels like yesterday, it can't possibly have been this long
I miss you homegirl, more than words can say RIP beautiful one
I hope that you are finally at peace,
Even though I wish your fate could have been undone.

I just wish you were here
Damn! I don't want to cry but I can't stop these slowing, drawing tears
I think god taking you was a mistake
My life was the one that he should have decided to take

My Love-To-You

I miss your voice, which to me is like a soft touch,
That soothes my body to a satisfaction which is (love) and not lust...
Your beauty amazes me and keeps me in a trance,
I would hold you in my arms if surely I had the chance...
Your smile is as bright as a clear blue sunny day,
Your hair is smooth as silk, it's unexplainable in all ways...
The stars are in your eyes so it keeps me in a trance,
You put hope and love in my life with a big shot of romance...
Your love is so sweet that it nourishes my soul,
You're the girl that I need, my 1 and only single rose...
Never leave me because I'll always be by your side,
I need you and you need me this is the destiny in our lives...
Dedicated to Monica Zapien. I thank you for helping me find the real man that I always was. That man was in my heart... exactly what you found and where you went. I love you baby!

PRETTY BOY ***This next writer is truly a ladies' man. He begins with a beautiful dedication to his mother, who sounds like she deserves every bit of it. Hopefully when we publish this and send it to him, he'll find a way to get it in her hands. Thank you mama, we need more women like you around. In his second piece he makes a dedication to a woman who has obviously touched his life in more ways than one. Love is special in today's world, full of chaos and madness. And then like a true ladies' man he closes with a dedication to all women. We think young girls in the hall should read that last piece because he's speaking from a male's perspective. But he does so with the utmost respect and compassion. Pretty Boy writes to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. We appreciate your kind words and we're sure whatever woman reads your pieces will feel them too.***

Message For The Ladies

Now to all the girls in the world that I got a message to speak.
These words come from my heart so "Please" don't take heed.
Listen to the words as you read — do it with care,
It's very plain to see a very deep message lies in there.
You don't need a man to reach happiness or success,
You need to love yourself first and know that is the best.
Thing you can do for your life,
That lies up in your hands so ignore your deceiving mind.
And men do deceive "please" know that this is true,
But then so do women. It's something we all do.
But truly not forever man and women do finally change,
Seeing love for what it is so refreshing just like the rain.
Women are truly special and are also very unique,
Your beauty is way greater than what you display from head to feet
Your heart is what truly matters and that is all we can trust,
Knowing there is a big difference between (real love) and just lust.
Let the stars shine in your eyes forever burn in your life,
Knowing you cannot be compared to for you're all truly one of a kind!
This is dedicated to all the ladies in the world. I thank you for what all you ladies do for this earth. Without you there would be no life. With that I must extend all my respects and also admiration to you all. But one thing I want you all to remember is, "real love" is NOT just skin deep. "Real love" lies in the heart where everything truly matters and counts. Allow your heart to guide you in all that you do for your heart never lies. And never let no one in this world get you down, all you ladies are unique, special, and truly one of a kind... queens in the world... angels sent from above... with that I thank you and always remember to shine like the stars that you are because you are special!

When everyone turned their backs for they were my so-called friends, it was you that was there from the beginning 'till the end. . . And when everyone gave up and didn't want to help, It was you that was there to listen to how I felt. . .

To My Momma

My momma I say that I have you with all of my heart,
For bringing me warmth when I was cold and light when it was dark...
I really can't express how thankful that I am,
That you took care of me as a child and helped me to be a man...
For when I was down and dragging my feet,
You gave me words of encouragement and pushed me to succeed...
When everyone turned their backs for they were my so-called friends, it was you that was there from the beginning 'till the end...
And when everyone gave up and didn't want to help,
It was you that was there to listen to how I felt...
I know I messed up and did some wrong things
And with tears in my eyes momma (I'm sorry) for everything...
You are a very strong woman with so much wisdom and insight, that Puts a smile on my face and makes my day's so much bright...
So, it is such a blessing and I'm honored to be your son
And I'll be there 'till the end for you because you've always been there since I begun!!!
This poem is dedicated to you Susie Lopez, my loving mother. You have raised some hard kids, me, Robert Lopez, Michelle Lopez, Michael Houle, all of us love and thank you! When we thought we had no hope, you were there... when we wanted to give up, you were there... when we thought no one cared, your love was always there... so with that just know we will be there forever for you. You're our Queen and we love you... I love you mom, may the Lord bless you forever.
Your son

You don't need a man to reach happiness or success, You need to love yourself first and know that is the best.

LA CIN ACHIM ***We, as a society, often point the blame on the things that are easiest to. Gangsta rap is one of those things. It's easy to say that rap is the cause of the problems with today's youth. "My little Johnny wouldn't be selling drugs if he wasn't listening to rap music." How familiar does that sound? Well, as this next writer from Soledad State Prison in Soledad, CA, points out, rap music is just a reflection of what's going on in our communities. From the beginning of time art has been used to reflect what the artists feels like expressing. If an artist steps out of his house everyday and gets harassed by the police, how can we be surprised when that very same artist makes a song talking about getting harassed by the police. And at least the artist is expressing himself in a productive way instead of taking his anger out in ways that aren't safe to him or the person that caused him pain. 'Hurt people, hurt people' so if we're doing everything in our power not to hurt people, yet express the hurt that's been done to us, please don't criticize us for that. And if you really want to know why, read this incredible piece.***

Black Intra-Racist

"Censure the messenger to censor the message" is the current message of the National Black Leadership (N.B.L) "When all else fails report to legislative dictatorship to demand that others do as we in power say" "Freedom being a wonderful idea as long as it doesn't conflict with our agenda" aren't new ideas. What the N.B.L, stiffly refuses to understand is that yesterday's important social cures didn't solve yesterday's problems and simply doesn't address contemporary issues and is antiquated and grossly inadequated to solve today's evolved human rights, social disparities and inequalities (e.g. police brutality, Bush's wars, Anglo-Saxon fascist jurisprudence, social economical, political and environmental racism.) There are active overwhelming, irrefutable, bona fide challenges to nearly every tenet of what was previously labeled as traditional values.

The abusive language and exaltation of violence in most gangsta rap music are the reality of our present day society. Most of us are intelligently mature enough to realize that by not talking about something won't cause it to go away.

An organized ban on gangsta rap music would be futile. It would only serve to promote it's sale of which would firmly entrench and tend to legitimize it's message.

Gangsta rap music is more like a comet than a wake-up call and for the N.B.L. to think of it in terms of the former is bleakly humorous. Truth isn't negated by silence and silence is always a lie in the face of centuries of grievous injustice a mortal wrong. Censorship is an aging, yet still basic evil. N.B.L's attempt to censor the arts is like the last swaggering dinosaur, unrealizant that dinosaurs are extinct.

Political extremism — in human behavior is generally the fault of societal abuse and gross neglect, resulting in intellectual dysfunction by individuals in conflict with society-at-large. To the gangsta rappers this militancy is a reactionary symptom of victimization by socio-economical inequalities, traumas, both physical and mental.

Obviously, some of the lyrics in the rap songs are invidiously disgusting (e.g. b****, h**, racist pig, and ninja to name a few.) However, the inhumane living conditions in the neighborhoods where these lyrics originate and depict are abhorrently far more insidious beyond comparison. It is moral cowardice, to condemn and vilify the rappers for depicting the truth of their experiences. Rappers are revolutionists, they accurately speak the truth of their environment and life/living experiences and need not apologize for this in our democratic society.

Further Americans should feel indebted to the gangsta rappers for creating an art form of which has caused a resurgent of urgent outcry, indignation and raised consciousness about the plight of those in inner city neighborhoods.

If the detractors of this art form were sincerely concerned, we would work towards changing the conditions of which has birth these lyrics. Instead of simply the critic, seeking the atypical American cosmetic-fix of cover-up and attempting to silence the voices of the aggrieved victims, which tells of the violence, ignorance, discrimination and disadvantaged.

To effect silence in the face of our failures and shame is a far worse crime than the effects of gangsta rap music. It would stand diametrically in the face of decency and serve as the epitome of cowardice to ignore the plight of those who rappers depict. A bandage over a cancer-sore; a finger in the crack of a dam; a new paint job over graffiti – be it black or white, it is still a cover-up.

It rapes the intellect and strips away "our" dignity to be told once again, blacks are in need of some additional protection against the negative effects of gangsta rap music.

The American people and in particular the New African people aren't a mindless herd of cattle forever in need of set-asides and censorship to insulate their fragile existence. In producing a salable — commercial product by rapping about the intolerable conditions they live in gangsta rappers effectively swing the pendulum of their lives into sync with the rest of America's hedonistic and materialistic society. Is this not "true capitalism?"

Now and only now as commercial artifacts depicting the miseries of some blacks appalling living conditions enter mainstream white American homes, we are finally shocked and offended.

Is it not abject hypocrisy that National Black Leadership fears gangsta rap music may do what all the centuries of America's cruelties and atrocities have been unable to do... to shame us before the world for the despicable conditions under which we have all so passively submitted to and even worse, we have cowardly allowed our most vulnerable, weak and disadvantage to live under.

The middle-class, petit bourgeois, mindset that music shall return what it was. Reestablishing an artistic status-quo will allow "them" to go back into hibernation to procrastinate over what to do until they become too old and senile to ponder the issues. Cowardly opposing the forcing hands of gangsta rappers, they've opted to advocate censuring the message-bearers. While the old guard still dreams of a 1960's style civil rights solution. When in the 21st century it is human rights that need to be fought for, with both eyes and open and alert.

After decades of civil right's failures, abuses, festering neglect, gangtsa rap is an eleventh-hour outcry of desperation, chiming like a death-knell over an entire generation. Gangsta rap is more than a pressure release, it is a reflection of the horrendous suffering, pain and frustration of an oppressed and impoverished people, if art reflects life, than why aren't these National Black Leaders more outraged about where the source of this art exist than the words exposing these horrible conditions?

Is this strain of honesty – so great that these leaders are unempowered to admit their failures? "We" must learn to be truthful to ourselves and admit our strategies of going along to get along in hopes that racist whites will one day grow a conscience and evolve into morally decent human being has failed, miserable so and is heavily laden with naivety.

The (N.B.L) should publicly confess and admit, "We don't have a clue." And then resign from whatever office in which is being held, of which is simply not the way of American politics; since honesty and moral decency has never been a prerequisite or political virtue.

We need hardly wonder why in "their" visceral anger and frustration, rappers ragingly demean and promote violence towards the police, their own race, and women in particular. It is the pecking order of majority-oppressing-minority; strong-oppressing-weak; and weak-oppressing-weaker, the domino theory. Brutality can neutralize the psyche, it can

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be subjugated, indoctrinate and coerced into hating itself. The effects of centuries of religious extensive brainwashing, America's ongoing continuous physical, economical, and psychological campaign of fascist/racism has not only deprived and alienated its victims, it has also caused the black victims of these atrocities to engage into:

Racial Intra- Victimization

We are one people, one humanity and at some point in or psycho-evolutionary growth if we are to continue to evolve we will have to come to terms with our interdependent and inter-responsibility to each other and accept that there aren't any painless bargain-basement cures for centuries of gross indifference. Neglect and domestic war crimes! In the name of sanity and humanity, how could WE have stood idly by and allowed untold atrocities and abuse of any one group by the dominate group without expecting exactly what we're now experiencing today in the urban black neighbors. (e.g. epidemic of chronic alcoholism, drug addiction, promiscuity, disproportionate single parenting, domestic violence, dysfunctional families, mental illness; truancy, juvenile delinquency, high employment and the list is near endless.) The N.B.L, Uncle Tom's and zealot pseudo-religious fanatic's answer to the plight of our people's life and death struggles is: Be a better victim, suffer in silence, have dignity and learn self respect in the face of death, abuse, racial oppression and genocide. Many, if not most are offended by naked truth, not euphemized. There are those who choose to pretend that these conditions don't exist in order to allow them to go back to their places of worship (hypocrisy) in their fineries and pray to their gods to be saved and taken away from here (earth) African-American respectability (of which at best is no more than a survival, second-class citizenship in America.)

Nevertheless, these same injustices in the natural order of things will inevitably be visited upon by us all. Instead of censuring the messenger for creating a survival art form out of an "urgent alarm", we need to be up-in-arms in opposition to the conditions this art form is reflecting.

When the National White Leadership complained about gangsta rap music it was ignored and discounted as racist. Similarly, now the National Black Leadership condemns and advocated censorship of gangsta rap music, it is still racist.

COMMENTARY (1): There are those who'd say that this is just blaming racist whites for "our" lack of discipline, perseverance, and failings. The question is not what isn't, rather what is – is not the failure of blacks in America due to the War Crimes perpetuated by racist whites against blacks in the public and private sector? There is no buts, this isn't a trick question, it is simply a yes or no answer? Twenty-first century gangsta rappers are revolutionists and have renounced the Uncle Tom, age-old survival strategy of being a better victim, a respectable, dignified black with a stiff upper lip, the good little soldier in the face of unrelenting, overwhelming racism. Others in chorus would chime that even if that being so, rappers are a self-serving, self destructive, having a negative influence on the young and others, promoting violence, criminality as a reactive/response to racial oppression as means to an end, and end that will most assuredly result in drug addiction, prison, broken lives and even their death — causing even more pain and grief to the black communities in particular. Moreover, the exploitation of women, expletive sexist slurs against women in rapper's songs — is an unconscionable, provoked, irremissible attack against women and therefore inexplicably unaccepted.

LA CIN ACHIM (CONT.)

Your point is deservingly well taken and you speak the truth — unfortunately, so do the rappers. Gangsta rappers are in a capitalist business (who many say is harmful), not unlike over half the businesses in this, the greatest of all: fascist/imperialist, hedonist, greedy/selfish America — from the all deadly to people and the environment and far more harmful than gangsta rap music. The issue then becomes Truth vs. The Greater Truth and not Right vs. Wrong. You would dispense with negative truth and promo gate only the positive truth of silence of which is a lie and thus your denial must fail. Ultimately the human experience is only one truth and that is which is... very simply you would ask the gangsta rappers to sacrifice the fruits of their harmful capitalist greed in the name of womanhood decency or for the betterment of humanity. You cannot have it both ways. If you want women to be respected and honored than STOP racism, the trap of the environment and the exploitation of the lives and health of all — only a brain-dead religious be(LIE)ver would accept the precept of "Do as I say do and not as you see me do." Those days of ignorant, darkness and blindly following are gone.

All that rappers say and do is alive, well and happening not in the studios, but in most black neighborhoods (and others) — everyday. Your moral outrage, venom and indignation is ill-served directed at the message of paid performers, actors and the likes. You are either cowardly lazy or your energies are misguided. Women, black women in particular, are in real danger and even more pointed: black men are on the endangered species list, being victimized and murdered in most American neighborhoods as we speak and very likely your neighborhood. You and those who oppose rap music need put aside your shame and guilt and gather up the strength and spinal courage to return to those perilous neighborhoods in question and take your fight where the battle is. Stop your foolishness you cannot win a battle of censorship against entertainers and their artifacts.

They, not unlike most Americans are in the service of the capitalist god, supply and demand and unless the demand stops the supply will not. Discipline is a two-way street and to demand that the seller/producers of rap music have more discipline than the consumer — is a puerile precept.

Stop chasing the symptoms of the cancer and go to its root cause: white racism. It is rightfully said that blacks in America have no stomach for war — obviously since blacks have never declared war against racist America. Is that the reason why "we" blacks are so cowardly silent about the violence, repression, oppression, and disparity in our neighborhoods and choose to make war against entertainers and actors, who refuses to be silenced — who are exposing us before the world.

Rappers will continue to profit and rap about the appalling (negative) truth in black neighborhoods in which many of us live in – until "we" grow the guts to change those despicable conditions in our neighborhoods. And then, once again art will reflect life, reflecting those (positive) revolutionary changes in our neighborhoods to rap about – and you will be instantly and pleasantly surprised at the encouraging, life-affirming, pro-black message of rappers.

A bandage over a cancer-sore; a finger in the crack of a dam; a new paint job over graffiti —
be it black or white, it is still a cover-up.

ALEX SHELTON

Alex Shelton is no joke. This man is "Old School," and he has plenty to share from his life. We are extremely honored to have him back in our pages this week, with not just one piece, but several in your face reality check commentaries that will have you spinning, especially if he's talking to you and your lifestyle. You will see Alex wrote for our editorial note contest, "Turning Back The Hands Of Time," we'll assume he got this one in a bit too late, otherwise, we are so sorry Alex, 'casue this piece is a piece to reckon with and we're sure it would have changed the outcome of the contest. Speaking of this contest, our winners will be announced in next week's issue of The Beat Within. We are still waiting to receive a few more votes from our Beat judges. Before we go, the one piece that blows us away is the one titled, "Old School D-O's," Wow! Alex truly speaks volumes in this one piece and the rest of his contributions, we appreciate his kindness and commitment to reaching you/us readers. We can't wait to hear from Alex again. He writes us from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, Ca

I'm only 18. I'm too young to die,
I should of listened to mom,
Why me??" I always thought I'd live to be seventy-three.
Just last week I was going to move out of town,
I never thought I'd see the clown

Predictions Of A Circus Clown

Me and my baby doll kickin' it together at the circus show
The lights went down and the play began
Real slow
The bells rang gently, and the horns blew loudly
As the chuckling of the clown appeared out from the stage proudly
With a colorful face and a big smile he pointed his
Long finger at me and whispered "Well...I'll be damned"
If it ain't another silly clown
I've seen you banging around town,
You ain't so cautious mister now you are alone without your homies, They can't back you up all the time, you walked
In here thinking it was all good
My homies followed you
I know where you live, where you hang out, we got the hood sewed up! What happened to your homie that got killed at his mom's house?
It ain't no joke, he glanced at me with fire in his eyes and streaks of rainbow tears running down his face.
Without one pause or moments of consideration.
Without once turning his eyes right or left or raising them up
to the sky,
He looked at me with his teeth so tightly compressed,
And jaw bulging through his skin.
He pulled out a pistol and fired with all it's brilliant light
Hitting my baby doll in the face,
She staggered backwards to the wall,
I was blinded by the blood that rained upon me.
Another clown in the crowd fired a shot at my chest,
And I looked down to blood spilling out — I could only think,
I should have packed my gun, memories of homeboys,
Dead or locked up flashed in my mind,
"I'm only 18. I'm too young to die, I should of listened to mom,
Why me??" I always thought I'd live to be seventy-three.
Just last week I was going to move out of town,
I never thought I'd see the clown,
I got trapped by an element of surprise,
When I'm in my coffin, I can imagine all the cries.
The circus clown was laughing real loud and quoted
"You win some, you lose some. an eye for an eye, is a gang's cry!"

If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time

The clouds, which had been threatening all day spread
Out in a dense and sluggish mass of vapor,
Already yielding large drops of rain against my cell window as I really thought to myself
For a quarter of an hour or so...
"If I could turn back the hands of time. I would very swiftly adjust the tricky mechanisms of this magnificent clock"
To whisper in my ear, a reality rhyme
With a loud chime
No batteries necessary
Alarming me with it's mighty powers to rise and shine down
To the last second at six o'clock in the morning
With a flash a crash, and a loud whistle
To say: School time is in effect. Number one rule so it's out the gate by eight and don't be late-don't worry about the 24-7"
There's some who are an inmate of the state
"I would be above and beyond my face"
I responded
I would constantly sit at my desk every weekend till 11 o'clock at night
Studying my school books
Like a school boy should be doing
My video and Play Station can wait 'cause I'd be focused on "Graduation Day"
Everyday my mother would read me a chapter or two 'cause she would have time for me
Every minute
Remember my son the Bible says: Honor and love your parents and be obedient, and God will bless you in your time
I wouldn't have a frown upon my face 'cause grandpa and grandma would still be alive
And all those families that are in a better place with God would be back...
I wouldn't be a bad boy no more I promise I really do...
I would tell my clock to remind me when it's time to come home...
Even if he has to send the lil' yellow bird
That flies in and out of his door to snatch me up
I would kick it with Gramm's house with the lighted candles
And listening to sweet music in a perfect rapture
A lovely capture
I'd walk hand in hand even as a grown man in her garden and pick her a flower as we walk along
Especially for her
The birds singing a song when Sunday came
How differently the day would be spent in the small church
down the block
Where all the loved ones went
And the sweet smelling air stealing in at the low porch
And filling the building with the fragrances of life
The people were so neat and clean and knelt so reverently in prayer
My child-like activities wouldn't be the same-like climbing up and down big trees, jumping on roofs of houses, playing door bell ditch,
throwing rocks at the trains
And starting a fire I couldn't maintain
Getting scratched, cut, bruised, teasing and testing dogs giving them the blues
"If I could turn back the hands of time" I would...be happy and peaceful with a loving respectful wife, kids never difficult or bad 'cause I'd make sure they had the knowledge and wisdom of the Word
my house would be spacious, five bedrooms and a pool, two cars, garage, and all the luxuries I deserve
My whole family would be proud of me,
my accomplishments in life I would be.
Quite a gentle, the clock is ticking.
Do you know what time it is?

Old School

"Salutations" puppets on a string;

We are the infamous ex-gangsters locked up and the key thrown away- that you very seldom hear about from the "old school"…
"Each one of us were in our own way a real fool."
There's a handful of 45, 55, and older "dropouts" whose villainous looking faces are repulsive and obscured by a quantity of white hair…
"With battle scars to prove the game just isn't fair".
We had our loyalty, our respect, and our 100% utmost love for the homeboys- we sacrificed a lot for this click…
"And when duty called we were up and on track and quick".
These devils harbor an enmity and strong hatred that could ultimately lead a good soul to a destructive and bitter end…
"And they are supposed to be your homies and friends".
The homeboys would always chant: "can' stop", "won't stop"… "But satan is laughing at them and thinking- until you get a life top"
Our determination is to reach out to all the youngsters and warn them of how a gang can poison your mind flow…
"Cut the strings Mr. Puppet and you know, let it go"
Your journey is in the wrong direction,
are you down for cause and all…
"This is why you are locked in a cell- in prison, jail, or juvenile hall"
It took us a better part of our lifetime to finally discover what this foolish gangbanging really is…
"An it ain't no quiz"
We've been there done that- "Now we are in the hat"
This old school function has been around since the '60's some of you weren't even born yet, this "true-influence" is a reality and wake-up call "listen" to what were saying to you!
"It ain't cool"
The dirty deeds of these unchanged gangs are the same level of operation: "Blood in" and "blood out," "deadly situations for any "soldier" who is trying to make a name for himself and gain status with the click- no less "it's like playing a game of chess"
I started out banging on the street, "then banging here in the devils- pit some ended up under six feet"
Death row, life imprisonment, look at all the examples- gang related!
"It all instigated"
Don't you ever wonder- "Even the homgirls are lighting and thunder."
It's a newer generation, they're falling like flies, "and dropping dimes"

ALEX SHELTON (CONT.)

There ain't one who can speak for lasting in the game, not even "old school" they want us to place them "first priority," over our real family relatives, "never!"
"Blood is thicker than water, they ain't that clever"
We got tired of being told what to do - taking order from another man- and we wouldn't even listen to our mother chain-of-command was another…
"He wasn't my real brother"
We maintained our safety and security at all time, and even joined together when committing crimes,
"Good times and bad times"
They said not to engage in no rumors, no gossip and no propaganda against another homeboy behind the well, but it still happened…
"Now, you make the call"
Manipulation, utilization, dedication, motivation, demon station, if I should follow, then lead me, if I should fall, then pick me up, if I should be killed, avenge me, they claimed victory was the climax of guerrilla warfare"…
"It's all a game if you dare"
Scandalous plotting, leaving a trail of blood in their path,
"we didn't want to be a part of god's wrath"
You want to bang? That's fine and dandy "whether in prison or the street, you'll come in handy"
They'll put you on a "mission" with knife in hand for a "hit"
"It may be too late to quit"
If you come to prison as a reminder: watch out for the gun tower,
"he's the one with the power"
You think there's hope?
"I've seen the mini-fourteen-light up in smoke"
If you think were playing, you'll find out the hard way what "old school" is saying
Before we flip the script don't forget the bangers who have tasted a speeding bullet, they can't speak to you from the grave or else they would warn you-
"everything your mom said is true"
Put yourself in your mother's shoes for a minute or a loved one, and your son or daughter joined a gang, and was killed!
"Not cool right? You would take flight"
Moms shedding "tears"-and a careless gangster doing all them years
What a waste of a life- "causing suffering and strife"
You are God's creation and He wants you to live a "good" life! Think about all this evil and do all you can to avoid these places, the streets is where it's at, having fun- "hang up the gun!"

I highly appreciate that I have the opportunity to get at the new generation if it wasn't for The Beat Within I don't know how I could reach those that really need our schooling.

Old School

Greetings Beat and all readers I would like to extend my respect! I highly appreciate that I have the opportunity to get at the new generation if it wasn't for The Beat Within I don't know how I could reach those that really need our schooling.

I am currently housed in an administrative-segregation slammed down most of the day… I work out every day and I'm staying focused and strong physically, mentally, spiritually! I will finally get released in about two more years. I have the kill airbrushing and painting and drawing! I gave up the crazy life, I've had enough. I know I will find a nice girl. It's a trip 'cause I look like I'm about 25 years old, no wrinkles. No grey hair and I'm in shape. They say prison preserves you. I believe it does. Ha, ha, ha (p.s. did you receive the skill drawing and letter and poem?)

God bless everyone. T.B.W. is doing a terrific job. I will send more artwork…hope you like the clown. Peace.

Why do I play the game if it's impossible to win?
Why did I put myself in the situation that I'm in?
It ain't gotta be this way, 'cause tomorrow's a new day
I can put the past behind me, but I can never throw it away
No matter how hard I try 'cause these feelings will always stay
So why do I play the game if it's impossible to win?
I hope that I'll change 'cause of this new mind frame that I'm in

check out the rest of Friskie's BWO piece on page 50